

Staff Summary for April 16-17, 2025

10. Big Game Hunting and Chronic Wasting Disease Testing**Today's Item****Information** ☐**Action** ☒

Consider adopting proposed amendments to regulations regarding big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing and taking final action under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| • Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) vetting | May 16, 2024; WRC |
| • WRC vetting | September 12, 2024; WRC |
| • Notice hearing | December 11-12, 2024 |
| • WRC discussion and potential further recommendation | January 15, 2025; WRC |
| • Discussion hearing | February 12-13, 2025 |
| • Today's adoption hearing | April 16-17, 2025 |

Background

At its December 2024 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a notice of its intent to amend regulations related to big game hunting and chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing. See Exhibit 1 for additional background information and a description of the Commission's proposed amendments.

At its February 2025 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a 15-day notice of sufficiently related changes to the regulatory language and initial statement of reasons (ISOR) regarding section 708.5. Additional background on the changes can be found in Exhibit 2 and the revised regulatory language can be found in Exhibit 7. The notice was issued on March 18, 2025; no comments were received.

Update

Based on its analysis of big game populations, the Department has provided final recommendations on tag quotas for deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, and elk (Exhibit 18). All tag quotas for each species and associated hunt zones fall within the ranges publicly noticed by the Commission in January 2025.

California Environmental Quality Act (By Species)*Section 360: Deer*

An initial CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with CEQA in 2007, and the Commission certified "Final Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting" (State Clearinghouse [SCH] No. 2007012091). In the 2007 document, the Commission assessed that increased tag quotas in deer hunt zone D-7 would have no significant environmental impacts. The Commission adopted regulations amending hunt zones, hunt seasons, and annual hunting tag quotas for deer.

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The 2007 environmental document is the basis for the allocation of deer hunting tags for the D-7 zone. The proposal to increase deer tags to 25 in the zone falls within the 2007 analysis and therefore does not represent any new significant or substantially more severe impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed; an addendum to the 2007 environmental document provides the details of the CEQA analysis supporting this conclusion (Exhibit 8).

Section 362: Bighorn Sheep

An initial CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with CEQA in 2019, and the Commission certified “Final Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting” (SCH No. 2018112036). In the 2019 environmental document, the Commission assessed the then-proposed project’s increase of 10 tags, creation of new hunt zones, and reallocation of a fundraising tag. In total, a range of between 0 and 42 bighorn sheep tags was assessed.

The Commission determined that adopting the regulations as proposed would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects. The Commission adopted the proposed regulations.

The bighorn sheep tag quota ranges in the 2019 environmental document are the basis for the current proposal. Though the proposed range of bighorn sheep tags in this proposal is an increase from the 2019 assessment, the top of the range still represents roughly 1 percent of the bighorn sheep population, just as in 2019. Therefore, the Department drafted an addendum to the 2019 environmental document that Commission staff has evaluated and determined to be reflective of the independent judgment of the Commission. No new significant or substantially more severe impacts under CEQA than those analyzed and disclosed in the 2019 environmental document will occur due to this proposal; an addendum provides details of the CEQA analysis supporting this conclusion (Exhibit 11).

Section 363: Pronghorn Antelope

An initial CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with CEQA in 2004, and the Commission certified “Final Environmental Document Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting” (SCH No. 2003112078). In the 2004 environmental document, the Commission assessed a pronghorn antelope tag allocation not to exceed 60 in the Mount Dome Hunt Zone; 80 in the Clear Lake Hunt Zone; 150 and 130 for Periods 1 and 2, respectively, in the Likely Tables Hunt Zone; 150 tags each in Periods 1 and 2 in the Lassen Hunt Zone; 150 tags in the Big Valley Hunt Zone; and 25 in the Surprise Valley Hunt Zone.

The Commission determined that adopting the regulations and tag quotas as proposed – within the assessed ranges in each hunt zone – would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects. The Commission adopted the proposed regulations.

The pronghorn antelope tag quota ranges described in the 2004 environmental document are the basis for the current proposal. All of the Department’s recommended tag quotas fall within the previously analyzed ranges. Therefore, the Department drafted an addendum to the 2004 environmental document that Commission staff has evaluated and determined to be reflective of the independent judgment of the Commission. No new significant or substantially more

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severe impacts under CEQA than those analyzed and disclosed in the 2004 environmental document will occur due to this proposal; an addendum provides details of the CEQA analysis supporting this conclusion (Exhibit 14).

Sections 364 and 364.1: Elk

An initial CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with CEQA in 2010, and the Commission certified “Final Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting” (SCH No. 2009112083) as part of its review and adoption of elk hunting regulations. In 2019, the Commission again amended elk hunting regulations and certified a final supplemental environmental document (SCH No. 2018112037) that assessed an increase in the tag quota range in the Northwestern Elk Zone, concluding that it would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously identified by the Commission in 2010.

Most recently, in 2024, the Commission amended elk hunting tag quotas for Grizzly Island hunt in periods 10, 12 and 13 by a total of 5 bull general tags, and hunt tag quotas for Siskiyou, Northwestern, Tehachapi, and Mendocino Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) elk hunts. The Tehachapi and Northwestern elk hunt zones were designated conflict zones, which allowed for increased landowner tags to be available. In adopting the regulations, the Commission determined that they would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed in the 2010 and 2019 elk hunting environmental documents.

The Department prepared an addendum to the 2019 elk supplemental environmental document that Commission staff evaluated and determined to be reflective of the independent judgment of the Commission. Amending the current elk hunting regulations as proposed will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than those previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2010 and 2019 elk hunting environmental documents; an addendum provides details of the CEQA analysis supporting this conclusion (Exhibit 17).

Significant Public Comments (N/A)

Recommendation

Commission staff: Approve the revised projects pursuant to CEQA and adopt the proposed regulatory amendments as recommended by the Department

Department: Adopt the proposed regulatory amendments with final tag allocations as outlined in the pre-adoption memorandum.

Exhibits

1. [Staff Summary from the December 2024 Commission meeting, Agenda Item 14 \(for background purposes only\)](#)
2. [Staff Summary from the February 2025 Commission meeting, Agenda Item 11 \(for background purposes only\)](#)
3. [Department memo transmitting CEQA document addenda for all affected species, received April 10, 2025](#)

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Deer and CWD Testing

4. [ISOR \(Sections 360 and 708.5 – Deer hunting and CWD testing\)](#)
5. [Amended ISOR \(Sections 360 and 708.5\)](#)
6. [Noticed regulatory language \(Section 360\)](#)
7. [Updated noticed regulatory language \(Section 708.5\)](#)
8. [Addendum to the 2007 Final Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting](#)

Bighorn Sheep

9. [ISOR \(Section 362 – Bighorn sheep hunting\)](#)
10. [Noticed regulatory language \(Section 362\)](#)
11. [Addendum to the 2019 Final Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting](#)

Pronghorn Antelope

12. [ISOR \(Section 363 – Pronghorn antelope hunting\)](#)
13. [Noticed regulatory language \(Section 363\)](#)
14. [Addendum to the 2004 Final Environmental Document Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting](#)

Elk

15. [ISOR \(Sections 364 and 364.1 – Elk hunting\)](#)
16. [Noticed regulatory language \(Sections 364 and 364.1\)](#)
17. [Addendum to the 2019 Supplemental Environmental Document to the 2010 Final Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting](#)
18. [Department pre-adoption memo, including final tag allotment recommendations for all species and responses to public comments, received April 10, 2025](#)
19. [Department presentation](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission, having considered the addenda and associated environmental documents, approves the revised projects pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act, and adopts the proposed amendments to sections 360, 362, 363 et al. related to big game hunting and chronic wasting disease with the noticed changes and the selection of the options as discussed today.

Staff Summary for December 11-12, 2024
(For Background Purposes Only)

14. Big Game Hunting and Chronic Wasting Disease Testing

Today's Item

Information ☐

Action ☒

Consider authorizing publication of notice of intent to amend big game hunting regulations for:

- (A) Deer and deer tagging, reporting, and testing requirements
- (B) Bighorn sheep
- (C) Pronghorn antelope
- (D) Elk

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) vetting | May 15, 2024; WRC |
| • WRC discussion and recommendation | September 12, 2024; WRC |
| • Today's notice hearing | December 11-12, 2024 |
| • Discussion hearing | February 12-13, 2025 |
| • Adoption hearing | April 16-17, 2025 |

Background

The Commission periodically adjusts various regulations related to big game hunting. Proposed regulation changes for the 2025-2026 seasons are combined for concurrent action under a single rulemaking that includes late-season deer hunting and chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing, Nelson bighorn sheep hunting, pronghorn antelope hunting, and elk hunting. See Exhibit 1 for information about CWD discovered earlier this year in California for the first time, and related regulations adopted by the Commission through an emergency action.

(A) Deer and CWD: Sections 360 and 708.5 (exhibits 3 and 4)

- Establish a late season buck hunt in deer hunt zone D-7 (Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, and Tulare counties).
- Define chronic wasting disease management zones (CMZs).
- Establish mandatory sampling requirements to enhance CWD surveillance within CMZs and establish what information hunters must provide with their harvested samples.
- Indicate how and where the Department provides current information on CWD detections in the state.

(B) Bighorn sheep: Section 362 (exhibits 6 and 7)

- Adjust the boundaries for hunt zone 6.
- Specify that the open zone fundraising tag can only be used to hunt in zones that are allocated at least one general public tag, and add zone 10 as a valid zone for the tag.

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- Divide the hunt season into two periods for the Newberry, Rodman and Ord Mountains Hunt Zone, and add a winter season to the White Mountains Hunt Zone.
- Increase flexibility for single zone fundraising tags by decoupling them from specific zones.
- Modify hunt tag quotas.
- Remove a non-functioning phone number.

(C) Pronghorn antelope: Section 363 (exhibits 9 and 10)

- Modify hunt tag quotas.

(D) Elk: Sections 364 and 364.1 (exhibits 12 and 13)

- Modify hunt tag quotas and SHARE tag allocations.
- Add archery-only hunt opportunities in the Siskiyou, Central Coast, and La Panza elk management units.
- Extend hunt seasons in the Northwestern and Mendocino elk conflict zones.

For regulatory sections where a hunt tag quota change is proposed, statutory requirements and Commission procedures require the rulemaking process to be initiated prior to the Department completing its collection and analysis of the most recent species survey data. Therefore, most of the current proposals contain ranges for tag amounts that will be refined as the rulemaking process progresses. Further details of the proposed changes to each section are available in the applicable initial statement of reasons (ISOR) and draft proposed regulatory language.

Today the Department will give a presentation summarizing regulation changes proposed for big game hunting and CWD testing (Exhibit 15).

Significant Public Comments

A commenter recommends clearly defining CWD management zones, requiring deer hunters within said zones to provide testing and sampling, and having hunters provide information about themselves and the samples they have gathered, such as geographic data (Exhibit 16).

Recommendation

Commission staff: Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations related to big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing, as recommended by WRC and the Department.

Committee: Support the proposed regulation changes related to big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing.

Department: Authorize publication of a notice of intent to amend regulations as detailed in the draft ISORs and draft proposed regulatory language.

Staff Summary for December 11-12, 2024
(For Background Purposes Only)

Exhibits

1. Staff summary for agenda item 12, June 19-20, 2024 Commission meeting, related to (emergency CWD regulations *(for background purposes only)*)
2. Memo transmitting ISORs, received November 26, 2024
3. Draft ISOR for chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing and late season D7 buck hunt, dated November 25, 2025 (sections 360 and 708.5)
4. Proposed regulatory language for CWD testing and late season D7 buck hunt
5. Draft economic and fiscal impact statement (STD. 399) for chronic wasting disease testing and late season D7 buck hunt
6. Draft ISOR for Nelson bighorn sheep hunting, dated November 25, 2024 (Section 362)
7. Proposed regulatory language for Nelson bighorn sheep hunting
8. Draft STD. 399 for Nelson bighorn sheep hunting
9. Draft ISOR for pronghorn antelope hunting, dated November 25, 2024 (Section 363)
10. Proposed regulatory language for pronghorn antelope hunting
11. Draft STD. 399 for pronghorn antelope hunting
12. Draft ISOR for elk hunting, dated November 25, 2024 (sections 364 and 364.1)
13. Proposed regulatory language for elk hunting
14. Draft STD. 399 for elk hunting
15. Department presentation
16. Email from Han Bui, received November 25, 2024

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission authorizes publication of a notice of its intent to amend sections 360, 362, 363, 364, 364.1 and 708.5 related to big game hunting regulations and chronic wasting disease testing.

Staff Summary for February 12-13, 2025
For Background Purposes Only

11. Big Game Hunting and Chronic Wasting Disease

Today's Item

Information ☐

Action ☒

Discuss and consider authorizing staff to provide public notice of sufficiently related changes to proposed regulations regarding big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| • Wildlife Resources Committee (WRC) vetting | May 16, 2024; WRC |
| • WRC discussion and recommendation | September 12, 2024; WRC |
| • Notice hearing | December 11-12, 2024 |
| • WRC discussion and potential further recommendation | January 15, 2025; WRC |
| • Today's discussion hearing | February 12-13, 2025 |
| • Adoption hearing | April 16-17, 2025 |

Background

At its December 2024 meeting, the Commission authorized publication of a notice of its intent to amend regulations related to big game hunting and chronic wasting disease (CWD) testing. See Exhibit 1 for additional background information and a description of the Commission's proposed amendments. Details can also be found, by section and associated species and/or program, in exhibits 3 through 10.

Update

At the January 2025 meeting of WRC, the Department discussed with WRC how to restrict cervid movement within and out of CWD Management Zones (CMZs). (See the meeting materials for item 16B, this meeting, for further details.) WRC supported incorporating regulatory changes related to cervid carcass movement into the current big game hunting and CWD testing rulemaking. Draft changes to the proposed regulatory language are provided as Exhibit 11. If the Commission authorizes staff to publish a 15-day notice, an amended initial statement of reasons (ISOR) and detailed list of proposed changes will be included in the notice package.

The draft changes are to Section 708.5 and can be summarized in three categories:

- Authority for the Department director to designate "testing and handling CMZs" in which the movement of certain carcass parts is restricted and submitting samples for CWD testing is mandatory. Specifies the criteria by which the decision to designate these zones must be made.
- Adding regulations for a "testing and handling CMZ," specifying what parts of the carcass can be transported and/or kept after harvest, valid sampling methods and proper disposal of remains, and information that must be provided when submitting a sample.

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- Minor grammatical edits for consistency, rewording for ease of understanding, and reordering of subsections for clarity.

The notice for the proposed amendments authorized in December was published in the California Regulatory Notice Register on January 17, 2025. Public comments were received prior to publication of the notice (exhibits 15 through 18), however no comments have been received following publication.

Today's meeting is an opportunity to receive further public comment, for public discussion of the proposed regulations, and to consider whether to approve the substantially related changes to the noticed amendments.

Significant Public Comments

1. John D. Wehausen, Ph.D., Board President, Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation, shares a foundation newsletter concerning the status of herds of bighorn sheep, conservation advocacy efforts, and mountain lion history and predation of bighorn sheep (Exhibit 12). Likewise, a commenter urges immediate action to control mountain lion predation of bighorn sheep in the eastern Sierras through an approved predation plan (Exhibit 13).
2. A commenter supports efforts to increase elk hunting opportunities (Exhibit 14).
3. A commenter opposes the addition of archery elk tags to several zones because archery is not a widely used method for elk hunting, and opposes the proposed late D-7 deer hunt due to declining deer numbers (Exhibit 15).

Recommendation

Commission staff: Support incorporating regulatory changes related to movement of cervid carcasses into the current regulatory package as recommended by WRC, by authorizing a notice of sufficiently related changes to the proposed regulations, as reflected in Exhibit 5.

Committee: Support incorporating regulatory changes related to movement of cervid carcasses into the current big game hunting and chronic wasting disease package.

Exhibits

1. Staff summary for item 14, December 11-12, 2024 meeting (*for background purposes only*)
2. Staff summary for item 3, January 15, 2025 WRC meeting (*for background purposes only*)
3. ISOR (Sections 360 and 708.5 – Deer hunting and CWD testing)
4. Noticed regulatory language (Sections 360 and 708.5)
5. ISOR (Section 362 – Bighorn sheep hunting)
6. Noticed regulatory language (Section 362)
7. ISOR (Section 363 – Pronghorn antelope hunting)
8. Noticed regulatory language (Section 363)
9. ISOR (Sections 364 and 364.1 – Elk hunting)

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10. Noticed regulatory language (Sections 364 and 364.1)
11. Draft changes to noticed regulatory language (Section 708.5)
12. Department presentation
13. Email from John D. Wehausen, Ph.D., Board President, Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep Foundation, received December 3, 2024
14. Email from David Coates, received December 25, 2024
15. Email from Brad Smith, received December 9, 2024
16. Email from Joe Hobbs, received December 13, 2024

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission authorizes publication of a 15-day notice of sufficiently related changes to proposed regulations regarding big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing with changes to the regulatory language and initial statement of reasons regarding section 708.5, as discussed today.

Memorandum

Date: April 7, 2025

To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director

Subject: **Submission of Addenda to CEQA Documents for Amendments to Sections 360, 362, 363, 364, and 364.1, Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR), RE: Deer, Bighorn Sheep, Pronghorn, and Elk Hunting, and Elk SHARE Hunts (respectively)**

Please find attached four addenda to existing CEQA Environmental Documents each for Deer, Bighorn Sheep, Pronghorn, and Elk. The Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends adoption of the pending 2025 big game hunting and chronic wasting disease testing regulation change, slated for adoption at the Commission's April 16, 2025 meeting.

If you have any questions regarding this item, please contact Scott Gardner, Wildlife Branch Chief, at (916) 801-6257.

Attachment

cc: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Scott Gardner, Branch Chief
Wildlife Branch

Mario Klip, Env. Program Manager
Game Conservation and Wildlife Connectivity Program Manager

Brett Furnas, Sr. Env. Scientist, Supervisor
Big Game Supervisor
Wildlife Branch

Regina Vu, Regulations Coordinator
Wildlife Branch

Ona Alminas, Env. Program Manager
Regulations Unit

Chelle Temple-King, Analyst

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
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Cooper Wilce, Attorney
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Robert Pelzman, Asst. Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Ari Cornman, Wildlife Advisor
California Fish and Game Commission

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State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 360 and 708.5
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Chronic Wasting Disease: Mandatory Testing and Late Season D7 Buck Hunt

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons:

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: San Diego, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The Fish and Game Commission (Commission) periodically considers the recommendations of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) in amending deer hunting regulations. Considerations include recommendations for adjusting tag quotas, setting hunt periods, modifying area boundaries, authorizing methods of take, among others, to help achieve management goals and objectives for deer management. Section 360 provides descriptions of hunt area boundaries, season opening and closing dates, methods of take (e.g., general methods, archery only, apprentice), tag designations (bull, spike bull, antlerless, either-sex), tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), bag and possession limits, and special conditions. To maintain appropriate harvest levels and hunting quality, tags must be adjusted periodically in response to dynamic environmental, biological, and social conditions.

One such environmental condition is the confirmation of chronic wasting disease (CWD), for the first time, in two California mule deer populations in May 2024. Given these detections, the Department enacted emergency regulations in June 2024 to define Chronic Wasting Disease Management Zones (CMZs) and to require that deer hunters in affected hunt zones submit appropriate samples from their harvest for CWD testing.

The proposed changes focus on defining the outbreak and mitigation of CWD transmission in identified CMZs through mandatory testing and increased late-season hunter opportunity for buck hunting. The regulations governing cervid importation and movement, as well as mandatory testing in CMZs, were last modified in July 2024 (2024-0201-01S, 2024-0529-

02SR, 2024-0712-02E). Additional hunts in subsection 360(c) have not been added in at least 20 years, but subsection 360(c) was last amended in 2020 (2020-0518-01S) to adjust the season for the additional hunt J-10 (Fort Hunter Liggett Apprentice Either Sex-Deer Hunt).

The proposed amendments here represent the cumulation of the Department's internal discussion, application of [California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan](#), and input from [Petition 2021-017](#). The proposed changes are necessary to address the recent detection of Chronic Wasting Disease in California, as well as to respond to hunter requests for late season hunts.

Background

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic wasting disease is caused by a misfolded, infectious protein called a prion. These prions concentrate in the central nervous system of an infected animal, but can be found in most tissues, secretions, and excretions including muscles (meat), lymphatics, blood, glandular fluids, saliva, feces, and urine, respectively. The disease is always fatal, there is no vaccine or treatment, and all cervid species native to North America – deer, elk, moose, and caribou – are susceptible. Despite efforts to manage and contain the disease, it has continued to spread due to prion ecology, limited management options, and anthropogenic movement of infectious animals or materials. Prions are extremely stable in the environment, remain infective for years to decades, and shed by infected animals long before they show any signs of disease. This can lead to seeding of the environment with infectious prions, an important factor in the spread and maintenance of CWD, before any diseased animals are seen on the landscape. Once established in an area, eradication of CWD has proven to be infeasible, if not impossible.

The detection of CWD in California will require changes of the Department's deer and elk management strategies. As CWD prevalence increases in a population, population growth rates (λ) can decrease and lead to population declines. Human dimensions research suggests that hunter participation may decrease in areas where CWD has been detected, particularly as CWD prevalence increases in a population. Decreasing hunter participation and tag sales, coupled with increasing costs to manage this disease could compound and significantly affect the Department's ability to manage CWD, deer, elk, and other species in California.

While CWD has never been linked to any human diseases, significant public health concerns remain due to many unknowns when it comes to prion diseases. For instance, increasingly sophisticated diagnostic and molecular assays have shown that there are multiple strains of CWD and that CWD prions can differentiate when passed through multiple hosts, creating new strains with altered host susceptibilities and disease characteristics. Indeed, the predominant CWD prion strain in Norway is different than the predominant strain in North America, with different characteristics. Additionally, CWD is in the same class of diseases as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (aka BSE or Mad Cow Disease), a prion disease of cows that was linked to variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), a neurodegenerative disease in people, through the consumption of BSE-tainted meat. Public health officials are recommending individuals and agencies do whatever possible to keep the agents of all known prion diseases from entering the human food chain.

The Department has been monitoring California deer and elk populations for CWD since 2000, testing over 6,500 deer and elk, and has been working to increase surveillance efforts with the voluntary help of hunters, taxidermists, and meat processors since 2018. Tests are done on postmortem samples and the majority of those come from hunter-harvested deer and elk, though we are only sampling and testing a small proportion of the deer and elk harvested in California. The first response action, following communication of the detections, is to enhance surveillance in the areas of the detections to determine the prevalence of CWD in the affected populations and the geographic extent of the infections. Hunter-harvested deer from the affected hunt zones is by far the most scalable and accessible source of samples for CWD testing. The Department will also increase its response to and sampling of other mortality sources or take. Enhanced surveillance in the affected populations is the necessary first step to providing better information to hunters, partners, and decision makers following these first detections of CWD in California. Knowing the prevalence and geographic extent will allow the Department to make informed decisions on CWD and deer management where CWD is detected.

Late Season (D7) Buck Hunt

Now that CWD has been detected in California, additional measures are essential to manage and mitigate its spread. The Department proposes a late-season buck hunt as a strategic tool to increase sampling of high-risk individuals, particularly mature bucks. This demographic is more likely to be CWD-positive and engage in high levels of social interaction during the rut, increasing transmission and disease spread risk. By targeting this segment of the population, we can better detect CWD cases and increase the likelihood of removing infected animals.

The hunt will enhance biological sampling efforts and target animals most likely to be CWD-positive, i.e. adult bucks. Collecting samples (e.g., retropharyngeal lymph nodes) from harvested animals is critical to:

- 1) meet the state's surveillance objectives,
- 2) better define an outbreak once CWD has been detected to inform management decisions, and
- 3) monitor that outbreak to assess management actions,

as outlined in [California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan \(Munk et al. 2024\)](#).

Targeting mature bucks later in the hunt season and closer to peak breeding season increases the likelihood of removing infected individuals, decreasing transmission and decreasing disease prevalence within the population ([Conner et al. 2021](#)).

Finally, this hunt is being proposed in response to [Petition 2021-017](#) and public requests for additional hunting opportunities, as voiced during Commission meetings. These requests included calls for expanded hunts, and this proposed regulatory change will act as a pilot to evaluate both hunter interest and harvest success. Additionally, it provides the Department with a practical opportunity to refine its approach to establishing new hunts through the formal regulatory framework.

Existing Authorities

Current statutory authorities focus mostly on regulating the take, possession, or movement of animals and their parts and include:

F&G CODE Section 200 provides the Commission with the power to regulate the take or possession of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles.

F&G CODE Section 2118 provides that animals of the order Artiodactyla are considered wild animals. Animals of the family Cervidae are of the order Artiodactyla.

F&G CODE sections 2120 and 2122 authorize the Commission, in cooperation with CDFA, to adopt regulations regarding the entry, importation, possession, transportation, keeping, or confinement of wild animals that are “not normally domesticated in this state as determined by the Commission.”

F&G CODE Section 3950 provides a definition for game mammals: deer, elk, prong-horned antelope, black and brown or cinnamon bears, mountain lions, jackrabbits, and varying hares, brush rabbits and pygmy rabbits, and tree squirrels. Nelson bighorn sheep are game mammals only for the purposes of sport hunting as described in F&G CODE section 4902.

F&G CODE sections 4301-4371 provide guidelines for deer management, including taking of deer, possession and importation, hunting license tags, and archery hunting.

Current Regulations

Current Title 14, CCR regulations governing deer hunting and management and mitigation of disease transmission are as follows:

Section 264 provides conditions for the use of lights while hunting.

Section 265 prohibits the use of dogs for the take of deer during archery seasons and provides criteria and limitations for the use of dogs for the take of deer during general methods seasons.

Sections 350 and 351 provide definitions for big game and forked-horn buck, antlerless, and either-sex deer.

Section 352 provides hunting and shooting hours on big game.

Section 353 provides methods that are authorized for taking big game.

Section 354 provides definitions and regulations for methods of taking big game.

Sections 360 and 361 provide regulations for general methods and archery deer hunting.

Sections 450-460 provide general regulations for the management of deer, including conservation, hunting seasons, deer herd management units, management plans, and annual deadlines for Department recommendations (December 15) regarding deer hunting.

Section 681 provides regulations for the importation of live cervids.

Section 712 explicitly includes all members of the family Cervidae and defines “skull plate.”

Section 714 makes it unlawful to import or possess any material that contains or is labeled or advertised as containing any biological fluid derived from a cervid.

Emergency Regulations Adopted

The Commission adopted emergency regulations on June 19, 2024, which became effective on July 22, 2024, and will expire on January 22, 2025. The [emergency regulations](#) enacted the following changes:

Section 708.5; Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements.

Added subsection 708.5(e): Added a new subsection defining CWD Management Zones (CMZ) for purposes of implementing mandatory deer sampling in deer hunt zones where CWD has been detected in deer or is expected based on recent CWD detections in deer. (Figure 1).

Added subsection 708.5 (f): Added a new subsection requiring hunters who take a deer within a CMZ to provide the Department with samples for CWD testing. This subsection also prescribes the permissible methods for hunters to provide the Department with samples.

Added subsection 708.5 (g): Added a new subsection establishing the minimum amount of information that hunters subject to subsection (f) must provide the Department to accompany CWD samples.

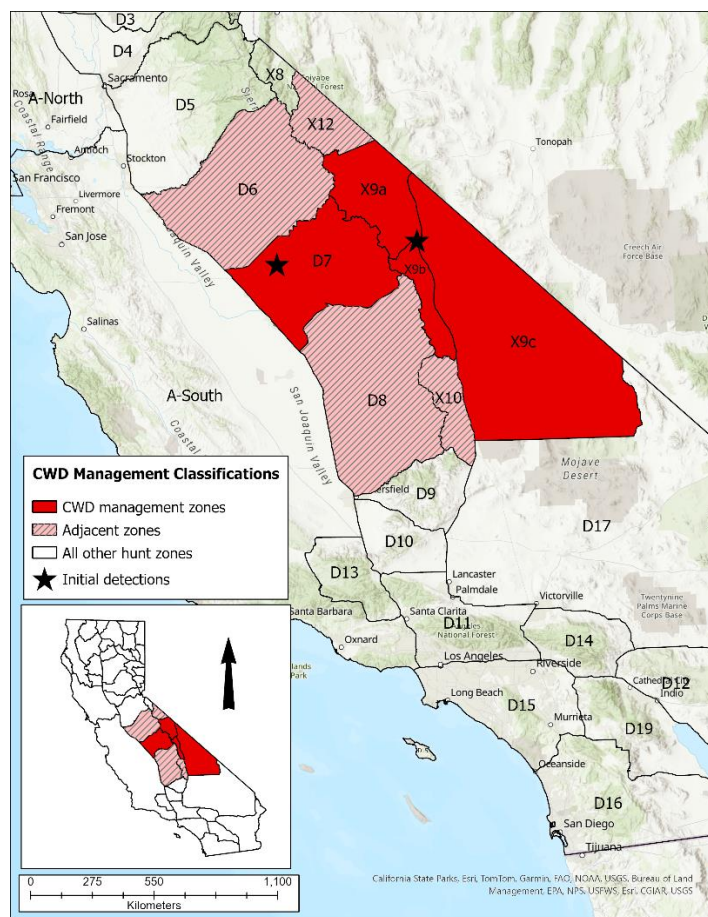


Figure 1. CWD Management Classifications

These emergency regulations will be allowed to expire on January 22, 2025, as the final deer season closure occurs at the end of November 2024. The following proposed regulations will provide a framework for mandatory testing for CWD (as in the previous emergency regulations), with amended language to enumerate the criteria for a hunt zone to be a CMZ.

Proposed regulations

Proposed regulations comply with the Department's Deer Management Plan and California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan.

Section 360 Deer

No changes to subsections (a) through (b).

Add subsection (c)(16) G-40 to establish a late season buck hunt in a portion of D-7.

Renumber subsections (16) through (44).

Establishing a late season buck hunt in deer hunt zone D-7, where CWD was recently detected, will serve as a strategic tool to increase sampling of mature bucks, the demographic most likely to be CWD-positive. These animals engage in high levels of social interaction during the breeding season, increasing transmission risk. By targeting this segment of the population, we can better detect CWD cases, aiding early detection and response efforts. This action aligns with objectives identified in California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (Munk et al. 2024) and public requests for expanded hunting opportunity submitted in Petition 2021-017 and at Commission meetings.

Section 708.5 Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements

No changes to subsections (a) through (d).

The proposed changes add subsections 708.5(e)-(h), as did the emergency regulations (2024-0712-02E) promulgated following the first CWD detections in California.

Add subsection (e) to define Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Zones (CMZs).

Based on the history and current understanding of CWD, it is likely, if not certain, that CWD will be detected in areas outside of the four hunt zones identified in the emergency regulations (D7, X9a, X9b, and X9c). In this proposal, what defines a CMZ is reframed to allow for new CMZs if CWD is detected outside of the currently affected zones to prevent delays in management actions. Adding a definition of a CMZ is necessary to adaptively manage the CWD outbreak in California over time, as target zones for mandatory testing will be variable based on current detections. Adaptive management is a cornerstone of the definition of "credible science" as defined in F&G CODE Section 33.

The defining criteria for inclusion as a CMZ are:

- (1) any deer hunt zones, excluding Zone A, in which a CWD-positive animal has been taken,

- (2) any deer hunt zones, excluding Zone A, within five miles of the location from where a CWD-positive animal was taken, and
- (3) any county within Zone A where a CWD-positive animal was taken, or is within five miles of where a CWD-positive animal was taken. The specified distance of five miles is necessary to create a biologically reasonable boundary for detections that fall on or near county or hunt zone boundaries. Zone A is too large and must be broken up into counties to create manageable CMZ boundaries.

Add subsection (f) define a “Testing CMZ” designated by the Department’s Director. This subsection allows for the Director to designate any CMZ for the mandatory testing requirement listed in subsection 708.5(g). As a CMZ is defined by 708.5(e)(1) through (3), rather than having the default of every CMZ requiring the submission of samples, it is of benefit to both the Department and to hunters to initiate or stop the mandatory submission of samples prior to the start of all hunt seasons (July 1 annually). Following identification of (a) hunt zone(s) as a CMZ (or a county in the case of Zone A), the Department can then determine if mandatory sampling is warranted based on the factors listed in proposed subsection (f). In situations where the Department has collected enough disease surveillance information to define a CWD outbreak and additional mandatory testing would not contribute any novel information to inform decision making, it would be beneficial for the Director to un-designate a Testing CMZ, which would result in a reduced burden on the hunter to cease submitting samples and a reduced cost on the Department for funding and staff time associated with receiving, processing, and analyzing samples. Other situations could include whether new sampling data is needed from a particular CMZ, and support management actions, such as direct sampling and targeted removal of CWD-positive animals, or adjustment to hunt zones for harvest, towards the overall protection of natural resources.

Add subsection (g) to establish a mandatory sampling requirement.

Mandatory testing is needed to enhance CWD surveillance within CMZs to determine prevalence and the geographic extent in affected areas, to clearly define the initial outbreak, and is one of the main objectives when responding to initial CWD detections as outlined in California’s Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (Munk et al. 2024). Knowing the prevalence and geographic distribution of a CWD outbreak informs decision makers and directs management actions. Tests are done on postmortem samples and the majority of those come from hunter-harvested deer and elk. Hunter-harvested deer from the affected hunt zones is by far the most scalable and accessible source of samples for CWD testing. The Department will also increase its response to and sampling of other mortality sources or take. Enhanced surveillance in the affected populations is the necessary first step to providing better information to hunters, partners, and decision makers following these first, and any future detections, of CWD in California. Knowing the prevalence and geographic extent will allow the Department to make informed decisions on CWD and deer management where CWD is detected.

Add subsection (h) to describe the minimum information that hunters must provide with their sample.

This is necessary so that the Department obtains essential information for monitoring

the spread of CWD, such as the geographic location of the take, and to ensure the Department can contact hunters if CWD is detected in their harvest.

Add subsection (i) to indicate how and where the Department will provide current information on CWD detections in California, and current Testing CMZs as designated by the Director.

This is necessary to ensure hunters have a place to find appropriate and up-to-date information on CWD, and the status of their hunt zone to comply with mandatory testing.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The proposed regulations will contribute to the surveillance of deer populations in California CMZs. The proposed regulations will provide additional deer hunting opportunities.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Section 360:

Authority: Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 200, 203, 203.1, 255, 265, 458, 459, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code.

Section 708.5:

Authority: 200, 203, 265, and 1050

Reference: 1050, 2118, 3950, 4302, and 4336, Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (AFWA) Best Management Practices for Prevention, Surveillance, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease Summary - [AFWA CWD BMPS 12 September 2018 FINAL.pdf \(fishwildlife.org\)](#)
- New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in New York State, 2021-2030, Appendix 3: Recommendation to Prohibit Cervid Biofluids in New York. - [Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in New York State 2021-2030 \(ny.gov\)](#)
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<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=225311&inline>
- Chiavacci, S. J. 2022. The economic costs of chronic wasting disease in the United States. *PLoS One* 17: e0278366. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278366>
- Numerous other states' CWD management plans accessible online through each state agency's website, including but not limited to, New York, Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

- Wildlife Resources Committee, May 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, September 2024

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the mandatory testing in CWD Management Zones, currently deer hunt zones D7, X9a, X9b, and X9c, would expire and the number of deer sampled and tested for CWD in affected areas would decrease significantly. A single year of robust disease surveillance data is insufficient to manage this disease effectively. Additionally, continued surveillance for this disease will be required to keep hunters informed, to adaptively manage,

and to inform species management. Without the late season D7 hunt, we would decrease our ability to selectively remove deer more likely to be CWD-positive. Removing infected deer has the benefit of decreasing transmission, decreasing environmental contamination, decreasing prevalence, and mitigating the spread of the disease.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. This proposal is economically neutral to businesses.

(b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment

The Commission anticipates no impact on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state, no impact on the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California as minor variations in hunting regulations are, by themselves, unlikely to provide a substantial economic stimulus to the state. The Commission does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety but anticipates benefits to the environment through the preservation of the deer population.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business

The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with this proposed action. However, in complying with the reporting requirements for CWD in the CMZs hunters may incur a cost related to the transportation of a deer carcass, head, or lymph nodes to a testing facility. While the Department has limited information and data regarding how far hunters drive to reach a sampling station, meat processor, or taxidermist, the estimated range that a hunter is likely to drive to and from the facility is expected to be between 5-100 miles with an average expected driving distance of 52.5 miles. Applying the average California gas price of \$4.678 per gallon to the average expected driving distance of 52.5 miles, with the expectation that most hunters drive a truck or SUV with an average gas mileage of 18 miles per gallon in order to haul their gear and carcass(es), gives an estimated individual cost of \$13.64 in transportation costs for delivering a sample to a testing facility, meat processor, or taxidermist.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State

No new costs/savings or changes to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies.

The Commission anticipates that the proposed regulatory action will require additional expenditures of approximately \$475,900 to maintain the proposed mandatory testing of deer carcasses for CWD. The proposed action will require additional expenditures for a position to implement the proposed CWD testing program in the Wildlife Health Lab; however, this position is fully funded under a United States Fish and Wildlife Service grant for the 2025-26 hunting season and imposes no additional costs to the Department (see tables 1 and 2 in the STD. 399 and Addendum). These costs are expected to be absorbed within the Department's existing budget and performed by staff currently operating in the capacities described in Table 1 of the STD 399 Addendum. However, the Department is projected to experience higher deer tag sales that may result in revenue increases (see STD. 399 and Addendum). No other state agencies are anticipated to be affected by the proposed emergency regulatory action.

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

(f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None

(g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None

(h) Effect on Housing Costs: None

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

This regulatory action is not anticipated to induce the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation of new businesses, the elimination of existing businesses within the state because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to deer hunting.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to deer hunting.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and can be a family tradition and a bonding activity. Further, given the potential implications for California's hunting and outdoor recreation economies, and for public consumption, tracking positive detections is necessary to keep known sources of infectious prions, e.g. CWD, out of the human food chain.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on worker safety.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in Fish and Game Code section 1700, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment, in addition to those screening actions the Department is already taking, by taking this regulatory step to require testing of harvested animals from affected hunt zones. This regulatory action aims to help determine the prevalence and geographic extent of the outbreak for Department staff to provide updates to hunters. It is imperative to understand the prevalence and geographic distribution of this outbreak to better advise and implement effective management strategies. Finally, the adoption of scientifically based deer seasons and tag quotas provides for the maintenance of deer populations to ensure their continued existence and supporting recreational opportunity. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation

The Commission does not anticipate other benefits from the proposed regulation.

State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Amended Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 360 and 708.5
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Chronic Wasting Disease: Mandatory Testing and Late Season D7 Buck Hunt

I. Date of Amended Initial Statement of Reasons: February 24, 2025

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: San Diego, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). Changes in the Initial Statement of Reasons since the publication on January 17, 2025 are designated by underline and strikeout.

The Fish and Game Commission (Commission) periodically considers the recommendations of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) in amending deer hunting regulations. Considerations include recommendations for adjusting tag quotas, setting hunt periods, modifying area boundaries, authorizing methods of take, among others, to help achieve management goals and objectives for deer management. Section 360 provides descriptions of hunt area boundaries, season opening and closing dates, methods of take (e.g., general methods, archery only, apprentice), tag designations (bull, spike bull, antlerless, either-sex), tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), bag and possession limits, and special conditions. To maintain appropriate harvest levels and hunting quality, tags must be adjusted periodically in response to dynamic environmental, biological, and social conditions.

One such environmental condition is the confirmation of chronic wasting disease (CWD), for the first time, in two California mule deer populations in May 2024. Given these detections, the Department enacted emergency regulations in June 2024 to define Chronic Wasting Disease Management Zones (CMZs) and to require that deer hunters in affected hunt zones submit appropriate samples from their harvest for CWD testing.

The proposed changes focus on defining the outbreak and mitigation of CWD transmission in identified CMZs through mandatory testing and increased late-season hunter opportunity for buck hunting. At January's Wildlife Resources Committee meeting of the Commission, the

committee members specifically requested that hunter-harvest carcass handling regulations be included in this proposed regulatory package. Department staff added additional language to the proposed regulations in Section 708.5 that would require hunters in defined deer hunt zones to leave high-CWD-risk materials at the site of the harvest, and provided appropriate exceptions to facilitate CWD sampling and testing. The regulations governing cervid importation and movement, as well as mandatory testing in CMZs, were last modified in July 2024 (2024-0201-01S, 2024-0529-02SR, 2024-0712-02E). Additional hunts in subsection 360(c) have not been added in at least 20 years, but subsection 360(c) was last amended in 2020 (2020-0518-01S) to adjust the season for the additional hunt J-10 (Fort Hunter Liggett Apprentice Either Sex-Deer Hunt).

The proposed amendments here represent the cumulation of the Department's internal discussion, application of [California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan](#), and input from [Petition 2021-017](#). The proposed changes are necessary to address the recent detection of Chronic Wasting Disease in California, as well as to respond to hunter requests for late season hunts.

Background

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic wasting disease is caused by a misfolded, infectious protein called a prion. These prions concentrate in the central nervous system of an infected animal, but can be found in most tissues, secretions, and excretions including muscles (meat), lymphatics, blood, glandular fluids, saliva, feces, and urine, respectively. The disease is always fatal, there is no vaccine or treatment, and all cervid species native to North America – deer, elk, moose, and caribou – are susceptible. Despite efforts to manage and contain the disease, it has continued to spread due to prion ecology, limited management options, and anthropogenic movement of infectious animals or materials. Prions are extremely stable in the environment, remain infective for years to decades, and shed by infected animals long before they show any signs of disease. This can lead to seeding of the environment with infectious prions, an important factor in the spread and maintenance of CWD, before any diseased animals are seen on the landscape. Once established in an area, eradication of CWD has proven to be infeasible, if not impossible.

The detection of CWD in California will require changes of the Department's deer and elk management strategies. As CWD prevalence increases in a population, population growth rates (λ) can decrease and lead to population declines. Human dimensions research suggests that hunter participation may decrease in areas where CWD has been detected, particularly as CWD prevalence increases in a population. Decreasing hunter participation and tag sales, coupled with increasing costs to manage this disease could compound and significantly affect the Department's ability to manage CWD, deer, elk, and other species in California.

While CWD has never been linked to any human diseases, significant public health concerns remain due to many unknowns when it comes to prion diseases. For instance, increasingly sophisticated diagnostic and molecular assays have shown that there are multiple strains of CWD and that CWD prions can differentiate when passed through multiple hosts, creating new strains with altered host susceptibilities and disease characteristics. Indeed, the predominant

CWD prion strain in Norway is different than the predominant strain in North America, with different characteristics. Additionally, CWD is in the same class of diseases as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (aka BSE or Mad Cow Disease), a prion disease of cows that was linked to variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), a neurodegenerative disease in people, through the consumption of BSE-tainted meat. Public health officials are recommending individuals and agencies do whatever possible to keep the agents of all known prion diseases from entering the human food chain.

The Department has been monitoring California deer and elk populations for CWD since 2000, testing over 6,500 deer and elk, and has been working to increase surveillance efforts with the voluntary help of hunters, taxidermists, and meat processors since 2018. Tests are done on postmortem samples and the majority of those come from hunter-harvested deer and elk, though we are only sampling and testing a small proportion of the deer and elk harvested in California. The first response action, following communication of the detections, is to enhance surveillance in the areas of the detections to determine the prevalence of CWD in the affected populations and the geographic extent of the infections. Hunter-harvested deer from the affected hunt zones is by far the most scalable and accessible source of samples for CWD testing. The Department will also increase its response to and sampling of other mortality sources or take. Enhanced surveillance in the affected populations is the necessary first step to providing better information to hunters, partners, and decision makers following these first detections of CWD in California. Knowing the prevalence and geographic extent will allow the Department to make informed decisions on CWD and deer management where CWD is detected.

Late Season (D7) Buck Hunt

Now that CWD has been detected in California, additional measures are essential to manage and mitigate its spread. The Department proposes a late-season buck hunt as a strategic tool to increase sampling of high-risk individuals, particularly mature bucks. This demographic is more likely to be CWD-positive and engage in high levels of social interaction during the rut, increasing transmission and disease spread risk. By targeting this segment of the population, we can better detect CWD cases and increase the likelihood of removing infected animals.

The hunt will enhance biological sampling efforts and target animals most likely to be CWD-positive, i.e. adult bucks. Collecting samples (e.g., retropharyngeal lymph nodes) from harvested animals is critical to:

- 1) meet the state's surveillance objectives,
- 2) better define an outbreak once CWD has been detected to inform management decisions, and
- 3) monitor that outbreak to assess management actions,

as outlined in [California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan \(Munk et al. 2024\)](#).

Targeting mature bucks later in the hunt season and closer to peak breeding season increases the likelihood of removing infected individuals, decreasing transmission and decreasing disease prevalence within the population ([Conner et al. 2021](#)).

Finally, this hunt is being proposed in response to [Petition 2021-017](#) and public requests for additional hunting opportunities, as voiced during Commission meetings. These requests

included calls for expanded hunts, and this proposed regulatory change will act as a pilot to evaluate both hunter interest and harvest success. Additionally, it provides the Department with a practical opportunity to refine its approach to establishing new hunts through the formal regulatory framework.

Existing Authorities

Current statutory authorities focus mostly on regulating the take, possession, or movement of animals and their parts and include:

~~F&G CODE~~**Fish and Game Code (FGC) Section 200** provides the Commission with the power to regulate the take or possession of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles.

~~F&G CODE~~**FGC Section 2118** provides that animals of the order Artiodactyla are considered wild animals. Animals of the family Cervidae are of the order Artiodactyla.

~~F&G CODE~~**FGC sections 2120 and 2122** authorize the Commission, in cooperation with CDFA, to adopt regulations regarding the entry, importation, possession, transportation, keeping, or confinement of wild animals that are “not normally domesticated in this state as determined by the Commission.”

~~F&G CODE~~**FGC Section 3950** provides a definition for game mammals: deer, elk, prong-horned antelope, black and brown or cinnamon bears, mountain lions, jackrabbits, and varying hares, brush rabbits and pygmy rabbits, and tree squirrels. Nelson bighorn sheep are game mammals only for the purposes of sport hunting as described in ~~F&G CODE~~**FGC** Section 4902.

~~F&G CODE~~**FGC sections 4301-4371** provide guidelines for deer management, including taking of deer, possession and importation, hunting license tags, and archery hunting.

Current Regulations

Current Title 14, CCR regulations governing deer hunting and management and mitigation of disease transmission are as follows:

Section 264 provides conditions for the use of lights while hunting.

Section 265 prohibits the use of dogs for the take of deer during archery seasons and provides criteria and limitations for the use of dogs for the take of deer during general methods seasons.

Sections 350 and 351 provide definitions for big game and forked-horn buck, antlerless, and either-sex deer.

Section 352 provides hunting and shooting hours on big game.

Section 353 provides methods that are authorized for taking big game.

Section 354 provides definitions and regulations for methods of taking big game.

Sections 360 and 361 provide regulations for general methods and archery deer hunting.

Sections 450-460 provide general regulations for the management of deer, including conservation, hunting seasons, deer herd management units, management plans, and annual deadlines for Department recommendations (December 15) regarding deer hunting.

Section 681 provides regulations for the importation of live cervids.

Section 712 explicitly includes all members of the family Cervidae and defines “skull plate.”

Section 714 makes it unlawful to import or possess any material that contains or is labeled or advertised as containing any biological fluid derived from a cervid.

Emergency Regulations Adopted

The Commission adopted emergency regulations on June 19, 2024, which became effective on July 22, 2024, and will expire on January 22, 2025. The [emergency regulations](#) enacted the following changes:

Section 708.5; Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements.

Added subsection 708.5(e): Added a new subsection defining CWD Management Zones (CMZ) for purposes of implementing mandatory deer sampling in deer hunt zones where CWD has been detected in deer or is expected based on recent CWD detections in deer. (Figure 1).

Added subsection 708.5 (f): Added a new subsection requiring hunters who take a deer within a CMZ to provide the Department with samples for CWD testing. This subsection also prescribes the permissible methods for hunters to provide the Department with samples.

Added subsection 708.5 (g): Added a new subsection establishing the minimum amount of information that hunters subject to subsection (f) must provide the Department to accompany CWD samples.

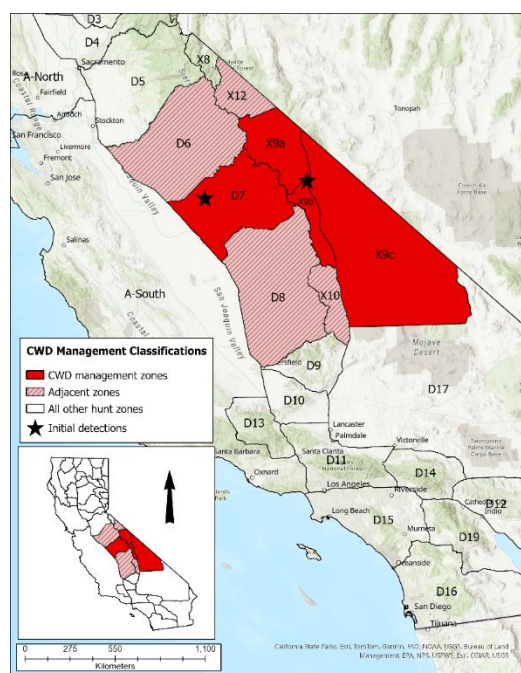


Figure 1. CWD Management Classifications

These emergency regulations ~~will be allowed to expire~~expired on January 22, 2025, as the final deer season closure occurs at the end of November 2024. The following proposed regulations will provide a framework for mandatory testing for CWD (as in the previous emergency regulations), with amended language to enumerate the criteria for a hunt zone to be a CMZ.

Proposed regulations

Proposed regulations comply with the Department's Deer Management Plan and California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan.

Section 360 Deer

No changes to subsections (a) through (b).

Add subsection (c)(16) G-40 to establish a late season buck hunt in a portion of D-7.

Renumber subsections (16) through (44).

Establishing a late season buck hunt in deer hunt zone D-7, where CWD was recently detected, will serve as a strategic tool to increase sampling of mature bucks, the demographic most likely to be CWD-positive. These animals engage in high levels of social interaction during the breeding season, increasing transmission risk. By targeting this segment of the population, we can better detect CWD cases, aiding early detection and response efforts. This action aligns with objectives identified in California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (Munk et al. 2024) and public requests for expanded hunting opportunity submitted in Petition 2021-017 and at Commission meetings.

Section 708.5 Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements

No changes to subsections (a) through (d).

The proposed changes add subsections 708.5(e)-(h), as did the emergency regulations (2024-0712-02E) promulgated following the first CWD detections in California.

Amend all subsections:

- There have been several changes to tense and/or possessive language for consistency and clarity of the section.

Add subsection (e) to define Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Zones (CMZs).

Based on the history and current understanding of CWD, it is likely, if not certain, that CWD will be detected in areas outside of the four hunt zones identified in the emergency regulations (D7, X9a, X9b, and X9c). In this proposal, what defines a CMZ is reframed to allow for new CMZs if CWD is detected outside of the currently affected zones to prevent delays in management actions. Adding a definition of a CMZ is necessary to adaptively manage the CWD outbreak in California over time, as target zones for mandatory testing will be variable based on current detections. Adaptive management is a cornerstone of the definition of "credible science" as defined in F&G

~~CODE~~FGC Section 33.

The defining criteria for inclusion as a CMZ are:

- (1) any deer hunt ~~zones~~zone, excluding Zone A, in which a CWD-positive animal has been ~~taken~~detected,
- (2) any deer hunt ~~zones~~zone, excluding Zone A, within five miles of the location from where a CWD-positive animal ~~was taken~~has been detected, and
- (3) any county within Zone A where a CWD-positive animal ~~was~~has been ~~taken~~detected, or is within five miles of where a CWD-positive animal ~~was taken~~has been detected. The specified distance of five miles is necessary to create a biologically reasonable boundary for detections that fall on or near county or hunt zone boundaries. Zone A is too large and must be broken up into counties to create manageable CMZ boundaries.

Amend subsection (e):

- (e)(1) - Change “zones” to “zone” for consistency and clarity with the rest of the subsection.
- (e)(1) through (3) - Change “taken” to “detected” to allow for CWD detections from carcasses that do not fall under the definition of “take.” “Take” is defined in FGC Section 86 as: hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill.

Add subsection (f) define a “Testing CMZ” designated by the Department’s Director, which allows the director to designate what, if any, requirements there may be for CWD “testing” and carcass “handling” within a CMZ, resulting in two types of CMZs: “testing CMZ” or a “testing and handling CMZ.” This change is necessary to make it clear that the Director may designate a particular CMZ for the mandatory testing requirement, and in addition, may also consider the potential for transmission of CWD during carcass handling and transport. This subsection describes the criteria to be used when designating what will be required in a CMZ. This subsection allows for the Director to designate any CMZ for the mandatory testing requirement listed in subsection 708.5(g). As a CMZ is defined by 708.5(e)(1) through (3), rather

Rather than having the default of every CMZ, as defined by 708.5(e)(1) through (3), have requiring the submission of mandatory sample testing or handling requirements, it is of to the benefit to of both the Department and to hunters to initiate or stop the mandatory submission of samples testing or handling of hunter harvested deer within CMZs prior to the start of all hunt seasons (July 1 annually). Following identification of (a) hunt zone(s) as a CMZ (or a county in the case of Zone A), the Department can then determine if mandatory sampling testing and/or handling is warranted based on the factors listed in proposed subsections (f)(1) through (2). For example, there may be situations where the Department has collected enough disease surveillance information to define a CWD outbreak and additional where continued mandatory testing would not contribute any novel information significantly to inform decision making. In these situations, it would be beneficial for the Director to un-designate a discontinue CWD sampling requirements in a Testing CMZ, which would result in a reduced burden on the

hunter to cease submitting samples and a reduced cost on the Department for funding and staff time associated with receiving, processing, and analyzing samples. Similarly, there may be situations where carcass handling requirements may be too burdensome or unwarranted in a CMZ. Other situations could include whether new sampling data is needed from a particular CMZ, and support management actions, such as direct sampling and targeted removal of CWD-positive animals, or adjustment to hunt zones for harvest, towards the overall protection of natural resources.

The defining criteria to designate requirements for a CMZ are as follows:

- (1) Testing CMZs will be designated by the need to better define an outbreak, department capacity and to support management actions.
- (2) Testing and handling CMZs will be designated based on the criteria in (1), in addition to risk of spreading the movement of CWD through the movement of hunter-harvested carcasses or their parts, and the Department's capacity to facilitate both CWD sample and disposal of high-risk materials.

Subsection (f)(1) describes how a "testing CMZ" is designated. Subsection (f)(1)(A) replaces previously proposed subsection (g), and moves the mention of submission of the preferred sample type (retropharyngeal lymph nodes, or the head) further down to (f)(1)(A)1. through 3. Language about permissible sampling methods is restructured for clarity. Samples are required to be submitted within 10 days of harvest to allow for the hunter to complete a hunting trip from a potentially remote location, and prep for submission of the sample in accordance with this subsection.

Amend section (f) to adjust capitalization in accordance with the Commission's style and remove redundant references to subsection (e) and the Department's website.

Subsection (f)(1)(A)1. through (B) Add subsection (g) to establishes a mandatory sampling requirement~~requirements for a testing CMZ. Mandatory testing is needed to enhance CWD surveillance within CMZs to determine prevalence and the geographic extent in affected areas, to clearly define the initial outbreak, and is one of the main objectives when responding to initial CWD detections as outlined in California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan (Munk et al. 2024). Knowing the prevalence and geographic distribution of a CWD outbreak informs decision makers and directs management actions. Tests are done on postmortem samples and the majority of those come from hunter-harvested deer and elk. Hunter-harvested deer from the affected hunt zones is by far the most scalable and accessible source of samples for CWD testing. The Department will also increase its response to and sampling of other mortality sources or take. Enhanced surveillance in the affected populations is the necessary first step to providing better information to hunters, partners, and decision makers following these first, and any future detections, of CWD in California. Knowing the prevalence and geographic extent will allow the Department to make informed decisions on CWD and deer management where CWD is detected.~~

Former subsection (f)(1)(A)1. to bring the deer is moved to subsection (f)(1)(A)3 to allow for language for testing and handling CMZs to match the order of presentation in (f)(2). The mention of bringing the harvested head is moved from subsection (f)(1)(A)1. to re-

numbered subsection (f)(1)(A)2 to separate out the permissible sampling methods by body part. Former subsection (f)(1)(A)2. is re-numbered to (f)(1)(A)1., and provides direction for hunters to bring the deer head with retropharyngeal lymph nodes or the retropharyngeal lymph nodes to a participating meat processor or taxidermist, and adds in the option to do so for CWD sampling station, to be sampled for CWD to provide maximum permissible options for sampling. Re-numbered subsection (f)(1)(A)2. describes information for hunters who self-sample the retropharyngeal lymph nodes and where to find information on this sampling method. Changes the possessive language for consistency and clarity of the section for the hunter self-sampling the deer, and removes a redundant reference to the Department's website. Subsection (f)(1)(A)3. from previous (f)(1)(A)1. gives the direction for hunters to bring the entire deer, clarifying that retropharyngeal lymph nodes must be included a CWD sampling station, and adds in the option to do so for a participating meat processor or taxidermist.

Subsection (f)(1)(B) is moved from previous subsection (h), with language changed from "Hunters shall provide the following information..." to "When submitting a sample, the following information shall be provided." This subsection defines the minimum information that hunters must provide with their sample. The hunter's name, GO ID number, deer tag or document number, and harvest location (GPS coordinates preferred) must accompany any CWD sample. This minimum sample information is to ensure the department knows the location of the harvest and can contact the hunter with testing results if warranted.

Subsection (f)(2)(A) through 2. Subsection (f)(2) describes how a "testing and handling CMZ" is designated and is necessary to specify carcass handling restrictions. Subsection (f)(2)(A) mimics the language of (f)(1)(A) for testing CMZs, except via (f)(1)(A)1. and 2., limits the permissible sampling methods to providing a head, or self-sampling (does not allow for providing a whole deer as the goal is to limit carcass transport). Subsection (f)(2)(A) is necessary to limit the movement of high-risk materials, including brain and spinal column, by requiring hunters to leave those portions at the harvest site. Limiting the movement of tissues that, in CWD-positive animals, have high concentrations of infectious CWD prions is an important regulatory and management action that can decrease the chances of anthropogenic movement of CWD to unaffected areas. Restricting the movement of potentially infectious materials is a foundational tenant of disease management.

Subsection (f)(2)(B) mimics the language of (f)(1)(B) regarding minimum information that hunters must provide with their sample. This addition is necessary to ensure that hunters know which information to submit with samples for testing and handling CMZs.

Subsection (f)(2)(C) specifies that all portions of the brain, spinal column and gut pile from an animal harvested in a testing and handling CMZ must be left at the harvest site. Subsection (f)(2)(C)1. describes the exceptions to this to allow hunters to bring heads and nervous tissue to the Department for mandatory CWD testing. Subsection (f)(2)(C)2. gives the exceptions for the heart, liver, and kidneys when possessed for human consumption in case hunters wish to consume these parts from a testing and handling CMZ.

Together subsections (f)(1) and (f)(2) provide the director and the Department ways to identify a CWD management zone and consider current CWD knowledge and outbreak status when determining what, if any, requirements should be required to effectively manage CWD in California.

Subsection (h) has been moved to subsections (f)(1)(B) and (f)(2)(B) for clarity and organization.

Add subsection (hg) to describe the minimum information that hunters must provide with their sample.

~~This is necessary so that the Department obtains essential information for monitoring the spread of CWD, such as the geographic location of the take, and to ensure the Department can contact hunters if CWD is detected in their harvest.~~

Add subsection (i) to specify that all portions of the brain, spinal column, and gut pile from an animal harvested in a CMZ must be left at the harvest site. Provide for exceptions to this to allow hunters to bring heads with nervous tissue to the Department for CWD testing.

Add subsection (j) to indicate how and where the Department will provide current information on CWD detections in California, and ~~current Testing~~ different types of CMZs pursuant to subsection (f) as designated by the Director.

This is necessary to ensure hunters have a place to find appropriate and up-to-date information on CWD, and the status of their hunt zone to comply with mandatory testing.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The proposed ~~regulations~~ regulatory amendments to Section 708.5 will contribute to the surveillance of deer populations in California CMZs for CWD. These regulations allow for surveillance in the areas of the detections to determine the prevalence of CWD in the affected populations and the geographic extent of the infections, where hunter-harvested deer from the affected hunt zones is by far the most scalable and accessible source of samples for CWD testing. The designation of “testing CMZs” or “testing and handling CMZs” make it clear that the Director may designate a particular CMZ for the mandatory testing requirement, and in addition, may also consider the potential for transmission of CWD during carcass or parts handling and transport. Knowing the prevalence and geographic extent will allow the Department to make informed decisions on CWD and deer management where CWD is detected.

The proposed ~~regulations~~ regulatory amendments to Section 360 will provide additional deer hunting opportunities: by way of a late-season buck hunt in D7. The hunt will enhance biological sampling efforts and target animals most likely to be CWD-positive, i.e. adult bucks. This demographic is more likely to be CWD-positive and engage in high levels of social interaction during the rut, increasing transmission and disease spread risk. Targeting mature bucks later in the hunt season and closer to peak breeding season increases the likelihood of removing infected individuals, decreasing transmission and decreasing disease prevalence within the population.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Section 360:

Authority: Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 200, 203, 203.1, 255, 265, 458, 459, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code.

Section 708.5:

Authority: 200, 203, 265, and 1050

Reference: 1050, 2118, 3950, 4302, and 4336, Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agency (AFWA) Best Management Practices for Prevention, Surveillance, and Management of Chronic Wasting Disease Summary - [AFWA CWD BMPS 12 September 2018 FINAL.pdf \(fishwildlife.org\)](#)
- New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Management Plan for White-Tailed Deer in New York State, 2021-2030, Appendix 3: Recommendation to Prohibit Cervid Biofluids in New York. - [Management Plan for White-tailed Deer in New York State 2021-2030 \(ny.gov\)](#)
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- Chiavacci, S. J. 2022. The economic costs of chronic wasting disease in the United States. *PLoS One* 17: e0278366. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278366>
- Numerous other states' CWD management plans accessible online through each state agency's website, including but not limited to, New York, Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

- Wildlife Resources Committee, May 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, September 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, January 2025

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the mandatory testing in CWD Management Zones, currently deer hunt zones D7, X9a, X9b, and X9c, would expire and the number of deer sampled and tested for CWD in affected areas would decrease significantly. A single year of robust disease surveillance data is insufficient to manage this disease effectively. Additionally, continued surveillance for this disease will be required to keep hunters informed, to adaptively manage, and to inform species management. Without the late season D7 hunt, we would decrease our ability to selectively remove deer more likely to be CWD-positive. Removing infected deer has the benefit of decreasing transmission, decreasing environmental contamination, decreasing prevalence, and mitigating the spread of the disease.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. This proposal is economically neutral to businesses.

(b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment

The Commission anticipates no impact on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state, no impact on the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California as minor variations in hunting regulations are, by themselves, unlikely to provide a substantial economic stimulus to the state. The Commission does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety but anticipates benefits to the environment through the preservation of the deer population.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business

The Commission is not aware of any cost impacts that a representative private person or business would necessarily incur in reasonable compliance with this proposed action. However, in complying with the reporting requirements for CWD in the CMZs hunters may incur a cost related to the transportation of a deer carcass, head, or lymph nodes to a testing facility. While the Department has limited information and data regarding how far hunters drive to reach a sampling station, meat processor, or taxidermist, the estimated range that a hunter is likely to drive to and from the facility is expected to be between 5-100 miles with an average expected driving distance of 52.5 miles. Applying the average California gas price of \$4.678 per gallon to the average expected driving distance of 52.5 miles, with the expectation that most hunters drive a truck or SUV with an average gas mileage of 18 miles per gallon in order to haul their gear and carcass(es), gives an estimated individual cost of \$13.64 in transportation costs for delivering a sample to a testing facility, meat processor, or taxidermist. However, this cost is not incurred if a hunter chooses to leave the brain, spinal column, and gut pile of a deer harvested in a CMZ at the site of harvest as permitted by these regulations.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State

No new costs/savings or changes to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies.

The Commission anticipates that the proposed regulatory action will require additional expenditures of approximately ~~\$475,900~~\$49,856 to maintain the proposed mandatory testing of deer carcasses for CWD. The proposed action will require additional expenditures for a position to implement the proposed CWD testing program in the Wildlife Health Lab; however, this position is fully funded under a United States Fish and Wildlife Service grant for the 2025-26 hunting season and imposes no additional costs to the Department (see ~~table~~table 1 and ~~2~~ in the STD. 399 and Addendum). These costs are expected to be absorbed within the Department's existing budget and performed by staff currently operating in the capacities

described in Table 1 of the STD 399 Addendum. However, the Department is projected to experience higher deer tag sales that may result in revenue increases (see STD. 399 and Addendum). No other state agencies are anticipated to be affected by the proposed emergency regulatory action.

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

(f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None

(g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None

(h) Effect on Housing Costs: None

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

This regulatory action is not anticipated to induce the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation of new businesses, the elimination of existing businesses within the state because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to deer hunting.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to deer hunting.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and can be a family tradition and a bonding activity. Further, given the potential implications for California's hunting and outdoor recreation economies, and for public consumption, tracking positive detections is necessary to keep known sources of infectious prions, e.g. CWD, out of the human food chain.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on worker safety.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in Fish and Game Code section 1700, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The Commission anticipates benefits to the State's environment, in addition to those screening actions the Department is already taking, by taking this regulatory step to require testing of harvested animals from affected hunt zones. This regulatory action aims to help determine the prevalence and geographic extent of the outbreak for Department staff to provide updates to hunters. It is imperative to understand the prevalence and geographic distribution of this outbreak to better advise and implement effective management strategies. Finally, the adoption of scientifically based deer seasons and tag quotas provides for the maintenance of deer populations to ensure their continued existence and supporting recreational opportunity. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation

The Commission does not anticipate other benefits from the proposed regulation.

Proposed Regulatory Language

Section 360, Title 14, CCR, is amended as follows:

§ 360. Deer.

[No change to subsections (a) and (b). . .]

(c) Additional Hunts.

[...No change to subsections (c)(1) through (c)(15)...]

(16) G-40 (D-7 Late Season Buck Hunt).

(A) Area: That portion of Madera County within the area described as D-7 (see subsection 360(a)(6)(A)).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt G-40 (D-7 Late Season Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in November and extend for nine consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: [0-50].

(17) M-3 (Doyle Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

(A) Area: That portion of Lassen County within the area described as X-6b (see subsection 360(b)(9)(A)).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-3 (Doyle Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in November and extend for nine consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 20.

(E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(18) M-4 (Horse Lake Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

(A) Area: That portion of Lassen County within the area described as X5a (see subsection 360(b)(6)(A)).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-4 (Horse Lake Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in October and extend for nine consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 10.

(E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~18~~19) M-5 (East Lassen Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Lassen County within the area described as X-5b (see subsection 360(b)(7)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-5 (East Lassen Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in October and extend for nine consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 5.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~19~~20) M-6 (San Diego Muzzleloading Rifle Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of San Diego County within Zone D-16 (see subsection 360(a)(15)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-6 (San Diego Muzzleloading Rifle Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in December and extend through December 31.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 80.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~20~~21) M-7 (Ventura Muzzleloading Rifle Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: All of Ventura County.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-7 (Ventura Muzzleloading Rifle Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the last Saturday in November and extend for 16 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 150.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~21~~22) M-8 (Bass Hill Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Lassen County within the area described as Zone X-6a (see subsection 360(b)(8)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-8 (Bass Hill Muzzleloading Rifle Buck) shall open on the fourth Saturday in October and extend for 9 consecutive days.

- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 20.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~22~~23) M-9 (Devil's Garden Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Modoc County within a line beginning at the intersection of the Malin Road (Modoc County 114) and the California/Oregon state line; east along the state line to the Crowder Flat Road; south along the Crowder Flat Road to the Blue Mountain Road (Modoc County 136); west on the Blue Mountain Road to the Blue Mountain-Mowitz Butte-Ambrose Road; south on the Blue Mountain-Mowitz Butte-Ambrose Road to Highway 139; north on Highway 139 to the Malin Road; north on the Malin Road to the point of beginning.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-9 (Devil's Garden Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in October and extend for 16 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 15.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~23~~24) M-11 (Northwestern California Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: Those portions of Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Mendocino, Siskiyou, and Trinity counties within the area described as Zone B-1 (see subsection 360(a)(2)(A)1.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt M-11 (Northwestern California Muzzleloading Rifle Buck Hunt) shall open on the second Saturday in November and extend for 16 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 20.
- (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(~~24~~25) MA-1 (San Luis Obispo Muzzleloading Rifle/Archery Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of San Luis Obispo County lying within the Los Padres National Forest.

- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt MA-1 (San Luis Obispo Muzzleloading Rifle/Archery Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open the last Saturday in November and extend for 16 consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 150.
 - (E) Special Conditions: Only archery equipment as specified in Section 354 or muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 may be used.
- (~~25~~26) MA-3 (Santa Barbara Muzzleloading Rifle/Archery Buck Hunt).
- (A) Area: All of Santa Barbara County.
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt MA-3 (Santa Barbara Muzzleloading Rifle/Archery Buck Hunt) shall open on the last Saturday in November and extend for 16 consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 150.
 - (E) Special Conditions: Only muzzleloading rifles as specified in Section 353 and archery equipment as specified in Section 354 may be used.
- (~~26~~27) J-1 (Lake Sonoma Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).
- (A) Area: That portion of Sonoma County within the boundaries of the Lake Sonoma Area, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) property described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of Hot Springs Road and the COE boundary; east and south along the boundary line to the intersection with Brush Creek; west along the north bank of Brush Creek (shoreline) to the Dry Creek arm of Lake Sonoma; south along the shoreline of the Dry Creek arm to Smittle Creek; north along the COE property line to Dry Creek; east along the COE boundary across Cherry Creek, Skunk Creek, and Yorty Creek to the point of beginning.
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-1 (Lake Sonoma Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in November and extend for two consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 25.
 - (E) Special Conditions:
 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.
 3. Tagholders shall attend an orientation meeting the day before the opening day of the season.

4. The use of dogs is prohibited.

5. Boats are required for all areas west of Cherry Creek ($\frac{2}{3}$ of the hunt area). Only cartop boats are allowed to launch from the Yorty Creek access.

(~~27~~28) J-3 (Tehama Wildlife Area Apprentice Buck Hunt).

(A) Area: That portion of Tehama County within the boundaries of the Tehama Wildlife Area.

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-3 (Tehama Wildlife Area Apprentice Buck Hunt) shall open on the last Saturday in November and extend for 2 consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 15.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

3. Tagholders shall attend an orientation meeting the day before the opening day of the season.

(~~28~~29) J-4 (Shasta-Trinity Apprentice Buck Hunt).

(A) Area: In those portions of Shasta and Trinity counties beginning at the junction of Highway 3 and Highway 299 in Weaverville; north on Highway 3 to the East Side Road at the north end of Trinity Lake; east on the East Side Road to Dog Creek Road; east on Dog Creek Road to Interstate 5 at Vollmers; south on Interstate 5 to Shasta Lake; south along the west shore of Shasta Lake to Shasta Dam; south along Shasta Dam along the Sacramento River to Keswick Dam Road; west on Keswick Dam Road to Rock Creek Road; south on Rock Creek Road to Highway 299; west on Highway 299 to the point of beginning.

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-4 (Shasta-Trinity Apprentice Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in November and extend for nine consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 15.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~29~~30) J-7 (Carson River Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Alpine County within the area described as Zone X-8 (see subsection 360(b)(12)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-7 (Carson River Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday following the closure of the X-8 general season (see subsection 360(b)(12)(B)) and extend for 9 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 0.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~30~~31) J-8 (Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Yuba County within the exterior boundaries of the Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area (as defined in Section 551, Title 14, CCR).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-8 (Daugherty Hill Wildlife Area Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in December and extend through December 31.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 15.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~31~~32) J-9 (Little Dry Creek Apprentice Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Butte County within the exterior boundaries of the Little Dry Creek Unit Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area (as defined in Section 551, Title 14, CCR).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-9 (Little Dry Creek Apprentice Shotgun Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in September and extend for 9 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)), per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 5.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.
3. Tagholders shall attend an orientation meeting the day before the opening day of the season.
4. Only shotguns and ammunition as specified in Section 353 may be used.

(3233) J-10 (Fort Hunter Liggett Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: That portion of Monterey County lying within the exterior boundaries of the Fort Hunter Liggett Military Reservation, except as restricted by the Commanding Officer.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-10 (Fort Hunter Liggett Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in October and continue for two (2) consecutive days and reopen on the second Saturday of October and continue for three (3) consecutive days, except if rescheduled by the Commanding Officer with Department concurrence between the season opener and December 31.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 30.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.
 3. Tagholders shall attend an orientation meeting the day before the opening day of the season.
 4. In the event the Commanding Officer cancels the hunt, J-10 tagholders may exchange the unused tag for any remaining deer tag and have accumulated and earned preference points restored pursuant to Section 708.14.

(3334) J-11 (San Bernardino Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: In those portions of Zone D-14 within San Bernardino County (see subsection 360(a)(13)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-11 (San Bernardino Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in November and extend for 9 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 40.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~34~~35) J-12 (Round Valley Apprentice Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: In that portion of Inyo and Mono counties within a line beginning at the intersection of U.S. Highway 395 and California Highway 168; west and south along Highway 168 to the North Lake Road turnoff; west along the North Lake Road and the Paiute Pass Trail to the Inyo-Fresno county line; north along the Inyo-Fresno county line to the Mono-Fresno county line; north along the Mono-Fresno and Mono-Madera county lines to the junction of the Mono-Madera county line and California Highway 203 at Minaret Summit; southeast along Highway 203 to its junction with Highway 395; south along Highway 395 to the point of beginning.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-12 (Round Valley Apprentice Buck Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in December and extend for 16 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 10.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~35~~36) J-13 (Los Angeles Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: In that portion of Los Angeles County within Zone D-11 (see subsection 360(a)(10)(A)).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-13 (Los Angeles Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in November and extend for 9 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 40.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~36~~37) J-14 (Riverside Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: In that portion of Riverside County within Zone D-19 (see subsection 360(a)(17)(A)).

- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-14 (Riverside Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in November and extend for 9 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 30.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

~~(3738)~~ J-15 (Anderson Flat Apprentice Buck Hunt).

- (A) Area: In that portion of Zone D-6 in Mariposa and Tuolumne counties lying within a line beginning at the intersection of Highway 140 and Bull Creek Road at Briceburg; north on Bull Creek Road (U.S. Forest Service Road 2S05) to Greeley Hill Road; west on Greeley Hill Road to Smith Station Road (County Route J20); north on Smith Station Road to Highway 120 (near Burch Meadow); east on Highway 120 to the Yosemite National Park Boundary (near Big Oak-Flat Ranger Station); southeast along the Yosemite National Park Boundary to Highway 140; west on Highway 140 to the Yosemite National Park Boundary; northwest along the Yosemite National Park Boundary to Highway 140 (at Redbud Campground); west on Highway 140 to the point of beginning.
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-15 (Anderson Flat Apprentice Buck Hunt) shall open on the fourth Saturday in November and extend for nine consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 10.
- (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
 - 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

~~(3839)~~ J-16 (Bucks Mountain-Nevada City Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

- (A) Area: Excluding Butte, Colusa and Glenn Counties, in those portions of Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Sutter and Yuba Counties within the area described as zone D-3 (see subsection 360(a)(4)(A)1).
- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-16 (Bucks Mountain-Nevada City Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone D-3 general season as defined in subsection 360(a)(4)(B).
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 75.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~3940~~) J-17 (Blue Canyon Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

(A) Area: Excluding Colusa County, in those portions of Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba Counties within the area described as zone D-4 (see subsection 360(a)(4)(A)2).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-17 (Blue Canyon Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone D-4 general season as defined in subsection 360(a)(4)(B).

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 25.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~4041~~) J-18 (Pacific-Grizzly Flat Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

(A) Area: Excluding Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, in those portions of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties within the area described as zone D-5 (see subsection 360(a)(4)(A)3).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-18 (Pacific-Grizzly Flat Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone D-5 general season as defined in subsection 360(a)(4)(B).

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 75.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).
2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(~~4142~~) J-19 (Zone X-7a Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

(A) Area: In those portions of Lassen, Nevada, Plumas and Sierra Counties within the area described as zone X-7a (see subsection 360(b)(10)(A)).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-19 (Zone X-7a Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone X-7a general season as defined in subsection 360(b)(10)(B).

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 25.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(4243) J-20 (Zone X-7b Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

(A) Area: In those portions of Nevada, Placer and Sierra Counties within the area described as zone X-7b (see subsection 360(b)(11)(A)).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-20 (Zone X-7b Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone X-7b general season as described in subsection 360(b)(11)(B).

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 20.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holders shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(4344) J-21 (East Tehama Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).

(A) Area: In that portion of Tehama County within the area described as zone C-4 (see subsection 360(a)(3)(A)4.).

(B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-21 (East Tehama Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in September and extend for 44 consecutive days.

(C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.

(D) Number of Tags: 50.

(E) Special Conditions:

1. Only junior license holder shall apply (see subsection 708.2).

2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperon 18 years of age or older while hunting.

(4445) Conditions for Additional Hunts.

(A) When hunting on military reservations or private lands, hunters shall have in their possession a written permit signed by the landowner, which may specify where and when the permittee may hunt.

(B) When required, tagholders shall check in and check out of designated check stations.

Note: Authority: Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 200, 203, 203.1, 255, 265, 458, 459, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code.

Proposed Amended Regulatory Language

Section 708.5, Title 14, CCR, is amended to read:

§ 708.5. Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements.

...

[No change to subsections (a) through (d)]

...

(e) Chronic wasting disease (CWD) Management Zones (CMZ) are defined as:

(1) Any deer hunt ~~zones~~zone in which a CWD-positive animal has been ~~taken~~detected, excluding Zone A, using sampling and testing methods based on credible science as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 33.

(2) Any deer hunt zone, excluding Zone A, within 5 miles of the location where a CWD-positive animal ~~was taken~~has been detected, using sampling and testing methods based on credible science as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 33.

(3) Any county within Zone A where a CWD-positive animal has been ~~taken~~detected or is within 5 miles of where a CWD-positive animal ~~was taken~~has been detected, using sampling and testing methods based on credible science as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 33.

(f) Annually, and prior to July 1, the ~~Director~~director of the department shall designate any CMZ ~~as that will be a "Testing~~testing CMZ," or a "testing and handling CMZ."

(1) Testing CMZs shall be designated based ~~on~~on the need to better define new or ongoing CWD outbreak(s) ~~pursuant to subsection (e)~~, the department's capacity to collect and test samples, and ~~or~~to support management actions for the protection of natural resources.

~~(g)~~(A) All hunters who harvest and possess a deer from a ~~Testing~~testing CMZ shall provide the department ~~with the retropharyngeal lymph nodes or the head from the harvested deer~~a sample, using only permissible sampling methods, for the purpose of CWD testing within 10 days of harvest. ~~The following are permissible~~Permissible sampling methods are:

~~(1) Bring the deer, or just the head to a California CWD sampling station (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Sampling-Station for locations)~~

~~(2)~~1. Bring the deer head (must include the retropharyngeal lymph nodes) to a California CWD sampling station (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Sampling-Station for locations) or a participating meat processor or taxidermist (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Meat-Processors-Taxidermists); or

~~(3)2. A hunter may self-sample their~~ Self-sample the deer and bring the retropharyngeal lymph nodes directly to a California CWD sampling station. The department maintains a how-to-guide and data card for CWD sampling, data collection, and self-sample submissions on its website (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Collect-Submit-Samples); or

3. Bring the deer (must include the retropharyngeal lymph nodes) to a California CWD sampling station (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Sampling-Station for locations) or a participating meat processor or taxidermist (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Meat-Processors-Taxidermists).

(B) When submitting a sample, the following information shall be provided: the hunter's name, GO ID number, deer tag or document number, and harvest location (GPS coordinates preferred).

(2) Testing and handling CMZs shall be designated based on the criteria of (f)(1) in addition to the risk of spreading CWD through the movement of hunter-harvested carcasses or their parts, and the department's capacity to facilitate both CWD sampling and disposal of high-risk materials.

(A) All hunters who harvest and possess a deer from a testing and handling CMZ shall provide the department with a sample, using only permissible sampling methods, for the purpose of CWD testing within 10 days of harvest. Permissible sampling methods are:

1. Bring the deer head (must include the retropharyngeal lymph nodes) to a California CWD sampling station (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Sampling-Station for locations); or

2. Self-sample the deer and bring the retropharyngeal lymph nodes directly to a California CWD sampling station. The department maintains a how-to-guide and data card for CWD sampling, data collection, and self-sample submissions (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD/Collect-Submit-Samples).

(B) When submitting a sample, the following information shall be provided: the hunter's name, GO ID number, deer tag or document number, and harvest location (GPS coordinates preferred).

(C) All hunters who harvest a deer within a testing and handling CMZ shall leave all portions of the brain, spinal column, and entrails (gut pile) at the harvest site. Exceptions are:

1. Any portion of the brain and spinal column possessed for the purpose of providing a sample for CWD testing in accordance with permissible sampling methods outlined in subsection (f)(2)(A)1 or 2, and brought directly to a department office, or California CWD sampling station within the same or an adjacent CMZ. Heads (except that portion required to

comply with subsection (a)), and any portion of the brain or spinal column removed from the harvest site for the purpose of CWD testing shall be relinquished to the department.

2. Heart, liver, and kidneys if possessed for human consumption.

~~(h) Hunters shall provide the following minimum information when submitting a sample pursuant to subsection (f): the hunter's name, GO ID number, deer tag or document number, and harvest location (GPS coordinates preferred).~~

~~(i)(g) The department maintains and updates shall maintain and update a website detailing current CMZs, as defined in subsection (e), Testing CMZs, CMZ designations pursuant to subsection (f), and current CWD surveillance information, including general locations and deer hunt zones where CWD-positive animals have been detected, using sampling and testing methods based on credible science as defined in Fish and Game Code Section 33 (see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD).~~

NOTE: Authority cited: Sections 200, 203, 265 and 1050, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 33, 1050 and 4336, Fish and Game Code.

Addendum to the
2007 Final Environmental Document
Regarding Deer Hunting
prepared by the
State of California
Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
on behalf of the
California Fish and Game Commission

as

Lead Agency Under the
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

for the

REGULARLY NOTICED RULEMAKING ACTION TO AMEND
SECTION 360 Deer HUNTS
TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS
2025 HUNTING SEASON
(OAL Notice File No. **Z2025-0107-03**)

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq) on behalf of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission). Fish and Game Code (F&G Code) Section 3950 designates deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sp.*) as a game mammal in California. F&G Code Sections 200-203 provides that the Commission may fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of deer that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code, Section 203.1, requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for deer. F&G Code, Sections 450-460, provides additional legislative direction regarding the management of California's deer.

The Commission is the lead agency under CEQA for the purpose of adopting annual hunting regulations for deer. In the proposed rulemaking, the Commission is considering modifying the previously approved project to establish a new deer hunt in response to a petition for regulation change, public comment, and to increase sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), in a CWD Management Zone. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects.

Earlier Project Approval

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program (CRP) approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (See generally California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 781.5, and Section 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of projects they approve, including regulations which may have potential to significantly affect the environment. In 2007, the Commission adopted the final environmental document regarding deer hunting. The document identified hunt zones, hunt seasons, and annual hunting tag quotas.

The proposed changes focus on increased late-season hunter opportunity for buck hunting. Additional hunts in 360(c) have not been added in at least 20 years, but the 360(c) was last amended in 2020 (2020-0518-01S) to adjust the season for the additional hunt J-10 (Fort Hunter Liggett Apprentice Either Sex-Deer Hunt).

The proposed amendments represent the culmination of Department internal discussion, surveillance of Chronic Wasting Disease in California, and public input from Petition 2021-017. The proposed changes are necessary to respond to hunter requests for late season hunts, and to increase sampling for CWD in a CWD Management Zone.

PROPOSED NEW LATE SEASON BUCK HUNT

Establishing a late season buck hunt in deer hunt zone D-7, where CWD was recently detected, will serve as a strategic tool to increase sampling of mature bucks, the demographic most likely to be CWD-positive. These animals engage in high levels of social interaction during the breeding season, increasing transmission risk. By targeting this segment of the population, however small the sample size, we may better detect CWD cases, aiding early detection and response efforts. This action aligns with objectives identified in the Department's California's Chronic Wasting Disease Management Plan and public requests for expanded hunting opportunity submitted in Petition 2021-017 and at Commission meetings.

The 2007 environmental document regarding deer hunting is the basis for the distribution of deer hunting tags allocated to the D-7 hunt zone. The document determined a quota of 4,000-10,000 tags in D-7 would have no significant impact. For 2025 the Department is recommending a new hunt and season within an existing deer hunting zone. The Department is recommending 25 new tags in the Madera County portions of the current D-7 hunt zone and occur in late November. The hunt is limited to Madera County in an attempt to focus hunting effort on resident deer that are more likely to test positive for CWD, and limiting pressure on migratory herds elsewhere in the hunt zone. Twenty-five tags is well below the standard deviation of estimated harvest over the last 5 years ($sd = 315$) in hunt zone D-7 during the general season. Given the previously assessed range, adding 25 tags will have no significant impact. Therefore, amending the deer hunt regulations to create this hunt will not cause any new significant or substantially severe impacts than previously considered by the Commission. The issuance of up to 25 tags does not directly correspond to the harvest of 25 deer, as actual harvest rates vary. The quota may be adjusted as necessary based on ongoing monitoring and management objectives.

No Subsequent Environmental Document is Required

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code, Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that, where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (California Code Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
 - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
 - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
 - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.
- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
 - A subsequent ED is not required.
 - Only minor changes to the project are described.
 - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
 - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.
 - The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

No Additional Impacts under CEQA

The Commission has determined that approving changes in current deer hunts will not result in any new or significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2007 Final Environmental Document for this project.

This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species because the project is designed to have no significant impact. The project is a minor regulatory modification.

This approval action will add a late season hunt with a very low tag quota and will benefit Chronic Wasting Disease management. No new or additional impacts under CEQA will occur due to this change.

Amendment OF the deer Hunt regulations

In conclusion, the Commission finds that approving the modification for deer hunts will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2007 Final Environmental Document Regarding Deer Hunting. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15164 in connection with this proposed action.

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director

Date

California Fish and Game Commission

State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Section 362
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunting

- I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons:
- II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: Sacramento

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento

(c) Adoption Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento

III. Description of Regulatory Action

- (a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) periodically considers the recommendations of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) in amending Nelson bighorn sheep regulations. Considerations include recommendations for adjusting tag quotas, setting hunt periods, modifying zone boundaries, authorizing methods of take, among others, to help achieve management goals and objectives for Nelson bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*). Section 362 provides descriptions of hunt zone boundaries, season opening and closing dates, and tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available) for Nelson bighorn sheep. To maintain appropriate harvest levels and hunting quality, tags must be adjusted periodically in response to dynamic environmental, biological, and social conditions.

The proposed changes focus on redefining a hunt zone boundary under subsection 362(a), amending language to fundraising tags and adjusting season dates under subsection 362(b), adjusting bighorn hunting tag quotas under subsection 362(d), and a non-substantive change to removing a nonfunctioning phone number under subsection 362(e). The last time these regulations were subject to major amendment was for the 2023-2024 hunting season. The proposed amendments represent the cumulation of the Department's internal discussions as well as stakeholder engagement. These proposed amendments were presented at the Sheep Summit in April 2024, at the Big Game Management Account (BGMA) Advisory meeting in

August 2024, as well as at a stakeholder meeting at which board members from the California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation and bighorn sheep outfitters in California provided input and feedback on proposed changes. The proposed changes are necessary to maximize hunter opportunity while also maintaining sustainable hunt opportunities, consistency with management unit plan recommendations, and Fish and Game Code (F&G Code). F&G Code subdivision 4902(b)(2) states the Commission may not adopt regulations authorizing the sport hunting in a single year of more than 15 percent of the mature Nelson bighorn rams in a single management unit. The following management recommendations are consistent with this mandate.

Background

Current regulations in Section 362 specify Nelson bighorn sheep tag quotas for each hunt zone and establish hunt zone boundaries in accordance with management goals and objectives described in the management unit plans. The Department's goal is to increase bighorn sheep hunting opportunities where feasible and compatible with population objectives, in which case recommendations will be offered to the Commission.

Per F&G Code subdivision 4902(d) the number of tags authorized for the purpose of raising funds shall not exceed 15 percent of the total number of tags authorized and the commission shall direct not more than three of the tags available for issuance for the purpose of raising funds. All revenue from the sale of fundraising tags shall be deposited in the Big Game Management Account. Since the first Nelson bighorn sheep fundraising tag was sold in 1987, the Department has raised over \$5.5 million for the management of big game species and habitats. Over the last ten years, Nelson bighorn sheep fundraising tags have raised an average of \$222,795 per year for big game management. The current regulations allow for one open zone fundraising tag, one fundraising tag in the Cady Mountains (Zone 9), and one fundraising tag in the Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains (Zones 1 and 8). However, in recent years, the population level in Zone 1 has declined such that the 2023/2024 season could only biologically support one tag through the general lottery. The fundraising tag for that zone was not issued and substantial revenue was lost. The proposed regulation changes are intended to allow the Department to name which zone for the Single Zone fundraising tags on an annual basis, if needed. This flexibility will allow the Department to continue to manage hunting opportunities compatible with population objectives, while also maximizing fundraising opportunities and revenue.

Existing Authorities

Current statutory authorities focus mostly on the take and possession of animals and include:

F&G Code Section 200 provides the Commission with the power to regulate the take or possession of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles.

F&G Code Section 203 specifies that the Commission has authority to promulgate regulations concerning open and closed seasons, bag and possession limits, hunt zones, methods of take, and restrictions based on physical distinctions.

F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, animal welfare, and other pertinent facts.

F&G Code Section 325 provides conditions by which the Commission may adopt special hunting seasons, provide for increased bag limits, or remove sex restrictions.

F&G Code Section 1050 describes the process and procedure for assigning fees to hunting entitlements.

F&G Code Section 3950 provides a definition for game mammals: deer, elk, prong-horned antelope, black and brown or cinnamon bears, mountain lions, jackrabbits, and varying hares, brush rabbits and pygmy rabbits, and tree squirrels. Nelson bighorn sheep are game mammals only for the purposes of sport hunting as described in F&G Code section 4902.

F&G Code Section 4700 defines fully protected mammals as Morro Bay kangaroo rat, Bighorn sheep, except Nelson bighorn sheep as provided by F&G Code section 4902., Northern elephant seal, Guadalupe fur seal, ring-tailed cat, Pacific right whale, salt-marsh harvest mouse, Southern sea otter, and wolverine.

F&G Code sections 4900-4904 provide guidelines for Nelson bighorn sheep management, including the development and maintenance of management unit plans, hunting fees, tag allocations, and hunter orientation.

Current Regulations

Current Title 14, CCR regulations governing bighorn sheep hunting are as follows:

Section 264 provides conditions for the use of lights while hunting.

Section 265 prohibits the use of dogs for the take of bighorn sheep.

Section 350 defines big game species.

Section 352 provides hunting and shooting hours on big game.

Section 353 provides methods that are authorized for taking big game.

Section 362 provides definitions, hunting zone descriptions, season opening and closing dates, tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), and bag and possession limits for bighorn sheep hunting.

Individuals are awarded a bighorn sheep hunting tag through the Department's Big Game Drawing. A limited number of fundraising tags are also available for purchase, usually by auction, via non-governmental organizations that assist the Department with fundraising. Harvest of a bighorn sheep is authorized for an individual with a tag for a respective hunt zone and season. Tag quotas are established based on a variety of factors, including population density and abundance, age and sex composition, and distribution.

Proposed Regulations

The proposed changes to Section 362 have been developed to increase hunter opportunity while allowing the Department to manage for sound biological levels by updating zone

boundaries, allowing hunt zone flexibility for fundraising tags, and adding additional hunt periods. The proposed regulations comply with the 2019 Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting and the [Draft Conservation and Management Plan for Bighorn Sheep in California \(September 2024\)](#).

Section 362 Nelson Bighorn Sheep

Amend section 362(a) to redefine the north and western boundaries for Zone 6 (Sheep Hole Mountains) (Figure 1). These proposed adjusted zone boundaries more accurately reflect the home range of bighorn sheep in this unit, based on recent GPS collar data. It is anticipated that the new boundary will increase hunter opportunity.

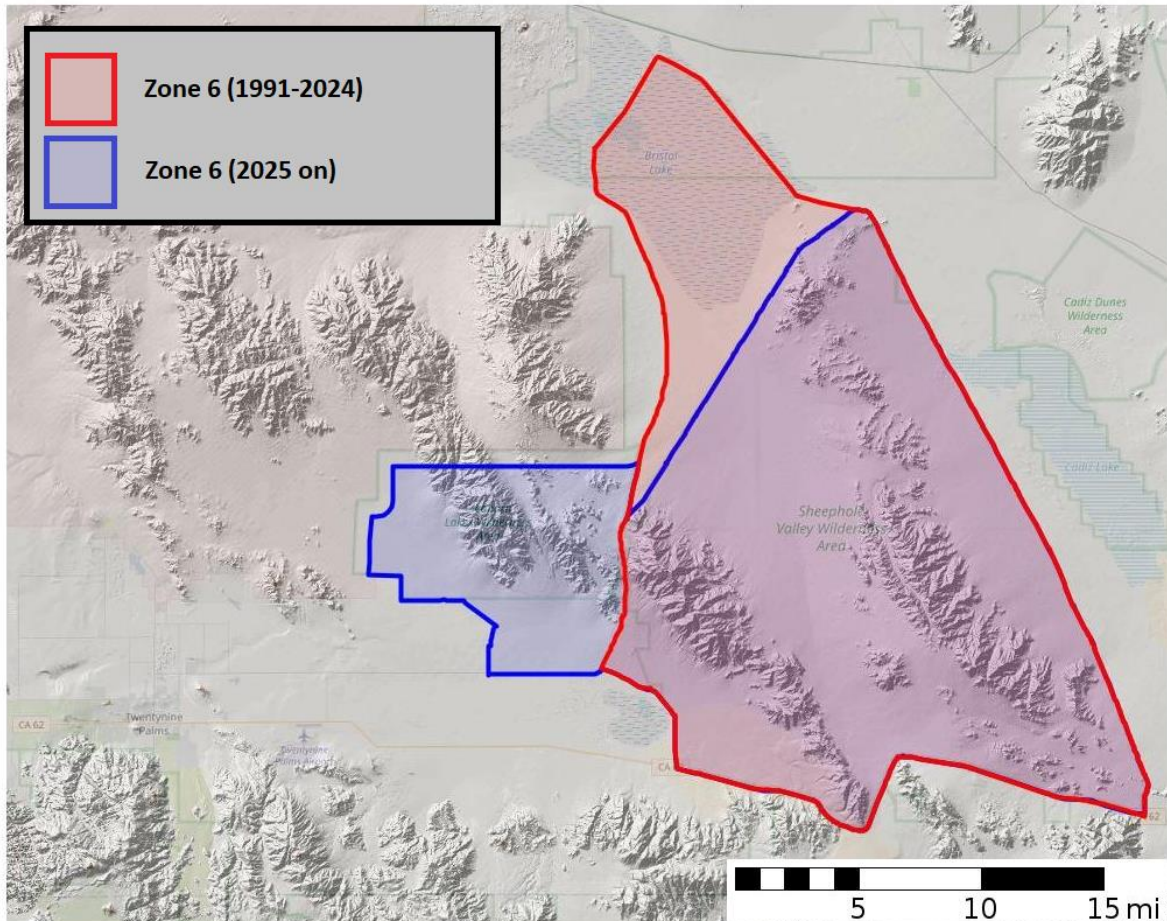


Figure 1. Map of current and proposed Zone 6 boundaries.

Amend subsection 362(b)(1) to specify that the Open Zone Fundraising Tag can only be used to hunt in zones that are allocated at least one general public tag. This will ensure that if a Zone is not issued general tags due to biological or environmental concerns, the Open Zone Fundraising Tag may not be used to harvest in a zone with zero tags allocated.

Amend subsections 362(b)(1), 362(b)(2), and 362(b)(3) to correct citations of Fish and Game Code from “subsection” to “subdivision.”

Amend subsection 362(b)(1)(A) to include Zone 10 in the Open Fundraising Tag. Zone 10 was created in 2019 but was never incorporated into the Open Zone Fundraising Tag language.

Amend subsection 362(b)(2)(A) and add subsections 362(b)(2)(B) and (C) to rename the Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag to Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1 and following season information.

Amend subsection 362(b)(3)(A) and add subsections 362(b)(3)(B) and (C) to rename the Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag to Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2 and following season information.

During the regulatory change process for the 2022-2023 license year, the Department proposed a quota of zero for the Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag. The Wild Sheep Foundation expressed concern at this loss of Department revenue and hunter opportunity. Increasing flexibility in the Fundraising Tags by renaming them to decouple them from specific hunt zones is intended to mitigate that issue in the future. Decoupling from a specific zone also allows managers the ability to assign the fundraising hunting opportunity to hunt zones that hold hunter interest and fundraising value.

Amend subsection 362(b)(4)(A) to remove Zone 10 and add subsection 362(b)(4)(D) to add Zone 10.

Amend subsection 362(b)(4)(C) Zone 7.

Amend subsection 362(b)(4)(C) 1. to create a Period 1 hunt season with the existing summer season dates and **add subsection 362(b)(4)(C)2.** to be the new Period 2 hunt season with a pilot winter season. Zone 7 is an extremely difficult area to hunt and has the lowest hunter success rates for any of the Nelson bighorn sheep hunt zones; adding a winter season to this zone is intended to increase hunter opportunity and potentially hunter success. Period 1 and Period 2 are two separate hunts with two separate tag allocations. As such, hunters will have to choose a season (i.e. Period 1 or Period 2) when they apply during the Big Game Drawing.

Add subsection 362(b)(4)(D) Zone 10.

Add subsection 362(b)(4)(D) 1. to create a Period 1 hunt season with the existing season dates and **add subsection 362(b)(4)(D)2.** to be the new Period 2 hunt season as a late winter season. Zone 10 hosts one of the largest populations of Nelson bighorn sheep in California and by splitting the season in half we are able to maximize hunter opportunity and experience while reducing crowding. Period 1 and Period 2 are two separate hunts with two separate tag allocations. As such, hunters will have to choose a season (i.e. Period 1 or Period 2) when they apply during the Big Game Drawing.

Amend subsection 362(d) to modify hunt tag quotas for each zone (currently shown as ranges) and to reflect increased zone ranges Zone 2, Zone 7 (Period 1), Zone 7 (Period 2), Zone 10 (Period 1), and Zone 10 (Period 2). The rest of the ranges will conform to the 2019 Environmental Document on Bighorn Sheep Hunting. Periodic adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental, and biological conditions are necessary to maintain sustainable populations of bighorn sheep and hunt opportunities,

as well as keeping with mandates and management recommendations. Unfortunately, administrative procedures and the Fish and Game Code require the CA Fish and Game Commission to receive proposed changes to existing regulations prior the completion of surveys and analyses, thus necessitating a range of numbers with this Initial Statement of Reasons. Analyses are scheduled for completion by March 2024 and final numbers would be provided with the Final Statement of Reasons.

Amend Subsection 362(d) to modify hunt tag quotas to ranges for each hunt zone.

Table 1. Section 362(d)

<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>	<i>Tag Allocation 2024</i>	<i>Proposed Tag Allocation 2025</i>
Zone 1 -- Marble/Clipper Mountains	1	[0-5]
Zone 2 -- Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains	2	[0-4]
Zone 3 -- Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges	3	[0-4]
Zone 4 -- Orocopia Mountains	1	[0-2]
Zone 5 -- San Geronio Wilderness	0	[0-3]
Zone 6 -- Sheep Hole Mountains	1	[0-2]
Zone 7 (Period 1) -- White Mountains	4	[0-4]
Zone 7 (Period 2) -- White Mountains	-	[0-4]
Zone 8 -- South Bristol Mountains	1	[0-3]
Zone 9 -- Cady Mountains	2	[0-4]
Zone 10 (Period 1) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	6	[0-7]
Zone 10 (Period 2) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	-	[0-7]
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	1	1
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1: Zone [1-10] (formerly Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag)	0	[0-1]
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2: Zone [1-10] (formerly Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag)	1	[0-1]
Total:	23	[0-52]

Amend subsection 362(e)(4) to remove a nonfunctioning phone number.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The goals and benefits of the regulations are to help maintain sustainable populations of Nelson bighorn sheep, maintain sustainable hunt opportunities, achieve management recommendations in existing unit plans, and so as not to exceed the 15 percent threshold identified in Fish and Game Code subdivision 4902(b)(2).

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Authority: 200, 203, 203.1, 265, 1050, and 4902 Fish and Game Code

Reference: 1050, 3950, and 4902 Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

- 2019 [Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting](#)
- [Draft Conservation and Management Plan for Bighorn Sheep in California](#) (September 2024)

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

- Wildlife Resources Committee, May 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, September 2024

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified or brought to the attention of the Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the outstanding issues concerning the regulations currently governing bighorn sheep hunting would remain unaddressed. The no change alternative was considered and rejected because it would not be consistent with maintaining bighorn sheep populations within desired population objectives. F&G Code subdivision 4902(b) and management unit plans specify desired harvest levels. Retaining the current tag quota for each zone may not be responsive to environmental and biological changes in the status of various herds. The no-change alternative would not allow for adjustment of tag quotas in response to changing environmental and biological conditions.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

(b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs or businesses within the State; no significant impacts to the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California are anticipated because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to significantly stimulate demand for goods or services related to bighorn sheep hunting. As previously mentioned, periodic or annual adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental, and biological conditions are necessary to maintain sustainable populations of bighorn sheep and hunt opportunities, as well as keeping with mandates and management recommendations. If greater numbers of hunters visit the areas in the state with increased annual opportunities, businesses that provide goods and services to Nelson bighorn sheep hunters could benefit from small increases in sales for that license year. The Commission does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety but anticipates benefits to the environment.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business

The total net number of tags is anticipated to increase from the previous year, so no adverse economic impacts to individuals or to businesses that support bighorn sheep hunts are anticipated. The Commission does not anticipate significant impacts on the representative private persons or businesses.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

No new costs/savings or change to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies. However, the Department is projected to experience higher bighorn sheep tag sales that may result in revenue increases (see STD399 and Addendum).

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

(f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None

(g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None

(h) Effect on Housing Costs: None

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state because the potential economic impacts of the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to Nelson bighorn sheep hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state because the potential economic impacts of the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to Nelson bighorn sheep hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and can be a family tradition and a bonding activity.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety:

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on worker safety.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in F&G Code Section 1700, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of populations of bighorn sheep to ensure their continued existence and supporting recreational opportunity. Adoption of scientifically-based tag quotas provides for the

maintenance of bighorn sheep populations to ensure those objectives are met. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation:

The Commission does not anticipate other benefits from the proposed regulation.

Proposed Regulatory Language

Section 362, Title 14, CCR, is amended as follows:

§ 362. Nelson Bighorn Sheep.

(a) Areas:

(1) Zone 1 (Marble/Clipper Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the intersection of Kelbaker Road and the National Trails Highway; north on Kelbaker Road to the junction with Interstate Highway 40; east on Interstate Highway 40 to the intersection with National Trails Highway; southwest on National Trails Highway to junction with Kelbaker Road.

(2) Zone 2 (Kelso Peak and Old Dad Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the intersection of Kelbaker Road and the Union Pacific Railroad in Kelso; southwest along the Union Pacific Railroad to intersection with unnamed road at Crucero; north on unnamed road to the merging with Mojave Road; northeast on Mojave Road to the junction with Zzyzx Road; north on Zzyzx Road to intersection with Interstate Highway 15; northeast on Interstate Highway 15 to the intersection with Cima Road; south on Cima Road to the intersection with the Union Pacific Railroad in Cima; southwest on the Union Pacific Railroad to the intersection with Kelbaker Road in Kelso.

(3) Zone 3 (Clark and Kingston Mountain Ranges)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino and Inyo counties beginning at the intersection of Interstate Highway 15 and California State Highway 127 in Baker; north on California State Highway 127 to the junction with Old Spanish Gentry Road at Tecopa; southeast on Old Spanish Gentry Road to the junction with Furnace Creek Road; southeast on Furnace Creek Road to the junction with Mesquite Valley Road; north on Mesquite Valley Road to Old Spanish Trail Highway; north and east on Old Spanish Trail Highway to the California-Nevada state line; southeast along the California-Nevada state line to the intersection with Interstate Highway 15; southwest on Interstate Highway 15 to the junction with California State Highway 127.

(4) Zone 4 (Orocopia Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of Riverside County beginning at the intersection of Interstate Highway 10 and Cottonwood Springs Road; east on Interstate Highway 10 to the junction with Red Cloud Mine Road; south on Red Cloud Mine Road to the junction with the Eagle Mountain Mining Railroad; southwest on the Eagle Mountain Mining Railroad to the junction with the Bradshaw Trail; southwest on the Bradshaw Trail to the Intersection with the Coachella Canal; west along the Coachella Canal to the junction with Box Canyon Road; northeast on Box Canyon Road to the junction with Cottonwood Springs Road; north on Cottonwood Springs Road to the intersection with Interstate Highway 10.

(5) Zone 5 (San Gorgonio Wilderness)

(A) Area: In that portion of Riverside and San Bernardino counties beginning at the intersection of Interstate Highway 10 and California State Highway 62, west on Interstate

Highway 10 to the junction with California State Highway 30; north on California State Highway 30 to the junction with California State Highway 38; east and north on California State Highway 38 to the junction with Forest Service Route 1N01; east on Forest Service Route 1N01 to its joining with Pipes Road; east on Pipes Road to the junction with Pioneertown Road; southeast on Pioneertown Road to the junction with California State Highway 62; southwest on California State Highway 62 to the intersection with Interstate Highway 10.

(6) Zone 6 (Sheep Hole Mountains)

~~(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the junction of California State Highway 62 and Ironage Road; northwest on Ironage Road to the intersection with Amboy Road; north on Amboy Road to the intersection with National Trails Highway; east on National Trails Highway to the junction with Saltus Road; southeast on Saltus Road to the junction with unnamed road in Saltus that runs through Cadiz Valley; southeast on unnamed road to the intersection with California State Highway 62; west on California State Highway 62 to the junction with Ironage Road.~~

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County within a line, excluding any area within 1 km of the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, beginning at the intersection of California State Highway 62 and Ironage Road; northwest on Ironage Road to the intersection with Amboy Road; west on Amboy Road to the intersection of Naborly Road; north on Naborly Road to the intersection of Pole Line Road; west on Pole Line Road to the intersection of Shelton Road; north on Shelton Road to the junction of the southern boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area; west along the southern boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area to the western boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area; north along the western boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area to the northern boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area; east along the northern boundary of Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness Area to the junction of Amboy Road; south on Amboy Road to the intersection of BLM NS443; northeast on BLM NS443 to the intersection of BLM NS458; southeast on BLM NS458 to the intersection of California State Highway 62; west on California State Highway 62 to the point of beginning.

(7) Zone 7 (White Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of Mono County within a line beginning at U.S. Highway 6 and the Mono-Inyo county line; northward on Highway 6 to the California-Nevada state line; southeasterly along the California-Nevada state line to the Mono-Inyo county line; westward along the Mono-Inyo county line to the point of beginning.

(8) Zone 8 (South Bristol Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the junction of Kelbaker Road and the National Trails Highway; west on the National Trails Highway to the intersection with Interstate Highway 40; east on Interstate Highway 40 to the junction with Kelbaker Road; south on Kelbaker Road to the point of beginning.

(9) Zone 9 (Cady Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the junction of Interstate Highway 40 and Newberry Road; north on Newberry Road to intersection with Riverside Road; east on Riverside Road to junction with Harvard Road; north on Harvard Road to junction with

Interstate Highway 15; northeast on Interstate Highway 15 to junction with Basin Road; south on Basin Road to intersection with Union Pacific Railroad; east along Union Pacific Railroad to intersection with Crucero Road; south on Crucero Road to intersection with Interstate Highway 40; west on Interstate Highway 40 to the point of beginning.

(10) Zone 10 (Newberry, Rodman, and Ord Mountains)

(A) Area: In that portion of San Bernardino County beginning at the junction Interstate 40 and Barstow Road; south on Barstow Road to the junction with Northside Road; east on Northside Road to the intersection with Camp Rock Road; northeast on Camp Rock Road to the intersection with Powerline Road; east on Powerline Road to Transmission Line Road to the intersection with Interstate 40; west on Interstate 40 to the point of the beginning.

(b) Seasons:

(1) Open Zone Fundraising Tag: The holder of the fundraising license tag issued pursuant to subsection-subdivision 4902(d) of the Fish and Game Code may hunt in Zones with at least one general public tag:

(A) Zones 1 through 4, 6, 8, ~~and 9, and 10~~: Beginning the first Saturday in November and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(B) Zone 5: Beginning the third Saturday in November and extending through the third Sunday in February.

(C) Zone 7: Beginning the first Saturday in August and extending through the last Sunday in September. Beginning, again, the third Saturday in December and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(2) ~~Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains~~ Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1: The Based on the Zone issued, the holder of the fundraising license tag issued pursuant to subsection-subdivision 4902(d) of the Fish and Game Code may hunt:

~~(A) Zones 1 and 8: Beginning the first Saturday in November and extending through the first Sunday in February.~~

(A) Zones 1 through 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10: Beginning the first Saturday in November and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(B) Zone 5: Beginning the third Saturday in November and extending through the third Sunday in February.

(C) Zone 7: Beginning the first Saturday in August and extending through the last Sunday in September. Beginning, again, the third Saturday in December and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(3) ~~Cady Mountains~~ Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2: The Based on the Zone issued, the holder of the fundraising license tag issued pursuant to subsection-subdivision 4902(d) of the Fish and Game Code may hunt:

~~(A) Zone 9: Beginning the first Saturday in November and extending through the first Sunday in February.~~

(A) Zones 1 through 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10: Beginning the first Saturday in November and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(B) Zone 5: Beginning the third Saturday in November and extending through the third Sunday in February.

(C) Zone 7: Beginning the first Saturday in August and extending through the last Sunday in September. Beginning, again, the third Saturday in December and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(4) Except as provided in subsection 362(b)(1), the Nelson bighorn sheep season in the areas described in subsection 362(a) shall be defined as follows:

(A) Zones 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9, and 10: Beginning the first Saturday in December and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(B) Zone 5: Beginning the third Saturday in December and extending through the third Sunday in February.

(C) Zone 7:

1. Zone 7 (Period 1): Beginning the third Saturday in August and extending through the last Sunday in September.

2. Zone 7 (Period 2): Beginning the first Saturday in January and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(D) Zone 10:

1. Zone 10 (Period 1): Beginning the first Saturday in December and extending through the first Saturday in January.

2. Zone 10 (Period 2): Beginning the first Sunday in January and extending through the first Sunday in February.

(5) Except as specifically provided in section 362, the take of bighorn sheep is prohibited.

(c) Bag and possession Limit: One mature ram defined as follows: a male Nelson bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*) having at least one horn, the tip of which extends beyond a point in a straight line beginning at the front (anterior) edge of the horn base, and extending downward through the rear (posterior) edge of the visible portion of the eye and continuing downward through the horn. All reference points are based on viewing the ram directly from a 90 degree angle from which the head is facing. A diagram showing the correct viewing procedure shall be distributed by the department to each successful applicant.

(d) Number of License Tags:

<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>	<i>Tag Allocation</i>
Zone 1 -- Marble/Clipper Mountains	4 [0-5]
Zone 2 -- Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains	2 [0-4]
Zone 3 -- Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges	3 [0-4]

Zone 4 -- Orocopia Mountains	4 [0-2]
Zone 5 -- San Gorgonio Wilderness	0 [0-3]
Zone 6 -- Sheep Hole Mountains	4 [0-2]
Zone 7 (Period 1) -- White Mountains	4 [0-4]
<u>Zone 7 (Period 2) -- White Mountains</u>	[0-4]
Zone 8 -- South Bristol Mountains	4 [0-3]
Zone 9 -- Cady Mountains	2 [0-4]
Zone 10 (Period 1) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	6 [0-7]
<u>Zone 10 (Period 2) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains</u>	[0-7]
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	1
Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag <u>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1: Zone [1-10]</u>	0 [0-1]
Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag <u>Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2: Zone [1-10]</u>	4 [0-1]
Total:	23 [0-52]

(e) Conditions:

(1) Nelson bighorn rams shall only be taken between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.

(2) Only methods specified in sections 353 and 354, Title 14, CCR, for taking bighorn sheep may be used.

(3) Each tagholder shall possess a spotting telescope capable of magnification of 15 power (15X), which is not affixed to a rifle, while hunting.

(4) Successful general tagholders shall present the head and edible portion of the carcass of a bighorn ram to the department's checking station within 48 hours after killing the animal. All successful tagholders shall notify the department's Bishop office by telephone at (760) 872-1171 or ~~(760) 872-1346~~ within 24 hours of killing the animal and arrange for the head and carcass to be examined.

(5) All successful bighorn sheep tagholders shall make the horns of each ram available to the department to be permanently marked in the manner prescribed by the department for identification purposes within 48 hours of killing the animal. The purpose of the permanent marking shall be to identify Nelson bighorn rams which were legally taken and which may be transported and possessed outside the areas described in subsection 362(a).

(6) The department reserves the right to take and use any part of the tagholder's bighorn ram, except the horns, for biological analysis as long as no more than one pound of edible meat is removed.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 200, 203, 203.1, 265, 1050 and 4902, Fish and Game Code.
Reference: Sections 1050, 3950 and 4902, Fish and Game Code.

ANALYSIS OF THE 2025 BIGHORN SHEEP HUNTING REGULATIONS

Addendum to the
2019 Environmental Document
Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting
prepared by the

State of California

Natural Resources Agency

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

on behalf of

California Fish and Game Commission

as

Lead Agency under the

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

for the

Regularly noticed rulemaking action to amend

Section 362 Bighorn Sheep

Title 14, California Code of Regulations

2025 Hunting Season

(OAL Notice File No. **Z2025-0107-03**)

Introduction

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., to inform consideration by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) of proposed amendments to existing regulations governing bighorn sheep hunting in California (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 362). Fish and Game Code (F&G Code), Section 3950(b) designates Nelson bighorn sheep as a game mammal in California. F&G Code, Section 203 authorizes the Commission to fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of bighorn sheep that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for bighorn sheep. The Commission establishes bighorn sheep hunting tag quotas through regulations amended annually, as needed, based on current population estimates derived from surveys by CDFW.

The Commission serves as the CEQA lead agency when it promulgates and amends the bighorn sheep hunting regulations. (Pub. Resources Code, Section 21067; CEQA Guidelines Section 15367.)¹ The Commission established maximum tag quotas for all bighorn sheep hunting zones in California in 2019 with the certification of a Final Environmental Document under CEQA (2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED) (SCH No. 2018112036). The 2019 Bighorn Sheep ED provides relevant and important informational value as the Commission as CEQA lead agency considers proposed amendments to the existing regulations for bighorn sheep hunting in California. In 2024, an addendum documented the Commission's consideration of adjusting tag quotas for the 2024-2025 hunt season and subsequently determined that the adjustments would have no additional effects than previously analyzed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects for 2025 and subsequent hunt seasons.

Earlier Project Approval

CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (See generally Title 14, CCR Sections 781.5 and Section 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of discretionary projects

¹ The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

they propose to carry out or approve, including promulgating regulations, which may have a potential to significantly affect the environment.

In 2019, the Commission certified a Final Environmental Document Regarding Bighorn Sheep Hunting (2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED) (SCH No. 2018112036) as the lead agency under CEQA as part of the Commission's review and adoption of the Bighorn Sheep Hunting regulations which focused on the potential for significant environmental impacts from 1) an increase in the tag quota ranges for Marble Mountains Hunt Zone by one tag, the Clark/Kingston Mountain Range Hunt Zone by two tags, and the White Mountains Hunt Zone by one tag; 2) increasing the individual tag quotas in other zones within previously analyzed quota ranges; 3) establishing a new hunt zone in the Newberry, Rodman, and Ord Mountains; and 4) reallocating a fundraising tag. The Commission considered the proposed project increase of 10 tags and two alternatives. The Commission, as lead agency, certified the ED and determined adoption of the amended regulations as proposed would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects. The Commission approved the increase of 10 tags for the 2019-20 bighorn sheep hunting regulations.

Proposed 2025 Changes for Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones

The bighorn sheep fundraising tags, hunt zones, seasons, and tag quota ranges described in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED are the basis for the distribution and number of tags currently allocated to all zones in regulation. Amendments to the fundraising tags are intended to increase opportunity and fundraising potential but do not alter the overall number of tags available. Amendments to the Zone 6 hunt zone boundary are based on GPS data collected by the Department. Amendments to the hunt seasons are intended to enhance hunter opportunity by temporally spacing hunters. Data collection and analyses for hunt zones was completed in early March. For 2025, the Department is recommending an increase in tag allocation ranges by 0-12 tags from the previously analyzed tag ranges, and an increase in tags allocated from 23 to 30. These increases will not cause any new significant or substantial impacts because the Department is continuing to monitor populations and recommend hunt tags using the same processes as analyzed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED. The increase in tag quota ranges reflect increases in the populations.

<i>Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones</i>	<i>2019 ED Tag Allocation Range</i>	<i>2024 Tag Allocation</i>	<i>2025 Proposed Tag Allocation Range</i>	<i>2025 Proposed Tag Allocation</i>
Zone 1 -- Marble/Clipper Mountains	0-5	1	[0-5]	1
Zone 2 -- Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains	0-2	2	[0-4]	3

Zone 3 -- Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges	0-4	3	[0-4]	4
Zone 4 -- Orocopia Mountains	0-2	1	[0-2]	1
Zone 5 -- San Geronio Wilderness	0-3	0	[0-3]	1
Zone 6 -- Sheep Hole Mountains	0-2	1	[0-2]	1
Zone 7 -- White Mountains	0-6	4	-	0
Zone 7 (Period 1) -- White Mountains	-	-	[0-4]	3
Zone 7 (Period 2) -- White Mountains	-	-	[0-4]	2
Zone 8 -- South Bristol Mountains	0-3	1	[0-3]	1
Zone 9 -- Cady Mountains	0-4	2	[0-4]	2
Zone 10 -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	0-6	6	-	0
Zone 10 (Period 1) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	-	-	[0-7]	4
Zone 10 (Period 2) -- Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	-	-	[0-7]	4
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	0-1	1	1	1
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1: Zone [1-10] (formerly Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag)	0-1	0	[0-1]	1
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2: Zone [1-10] (formerly Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag)	0-1	1	[0-1]	1
Total:	0-40	23	[0-52]	30

The 2025 proposed changes are intended to increase hunter opportunity and are supported by data collected by the Department. The 2025 proposed increase of a maximum of up to 52 mature Nelson bighorn rams accounts for approximately 1% of the estimated 4,500 Nelson bighorn sheep statewide. This is consistent with the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED, that analyzed a maximum of 42 tags out of an estimated 4,000 Nelson bighorn statewide (approximately 1%) would not have a significant

negative effect. Similarly, the proposed increase in tag quota ranges within individual zones fall within the 15% of the mature ram population estimated for those populations. There are no new significant or substantially more severe impacts from amending the bighorn sheep hunting regulations as proposed.

No Subsequent Environmental Document is Required

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code, Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that, where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (Title 14, Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
 - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
 - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
 - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.
- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
 - A subsequent ED is not required.
 - Only minor changes to the project are described.
 - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
 - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.
 - The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

No Additional Impacts under CEQA

The Commission has determined that amending the current bighorn sheep hunting regulations based on annual survey results will not result in any new or significant or

substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep ED for this project.

This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species.

This approval action adjusts the previous year fundraising tags to allow for more flexibility and increased fundraising potential; a hunt zone boundary to better reflect habitat use based on GPS data; season adjustments to increase hunter opportunity; and tag quotas based on more current population information. No other aspect of the project has changed. No new significant or substantially more severe impacts under CEQA will occur due to this change.

Amendment of the Bighorn Sheep Hunting regulations

In conclusion, the Commission finds that amending the bighorn sheep hunt regulations in CCR, Title 14, Section 362, will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2019 Bighorn Sheep Hunting ED. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to the CCR, Title 14, Section 15164, in connection with this proposed action.

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission

Date

State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 363
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Pronghorn Antelope Hunting

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons:

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: San Diego, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The Fish and Game Commission (Commission) periodically considers the recommendations of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) in updating pronghorn antelope regulations. Considerations include recommendations for adjusting tag quotas, setting hunt periods, modifying zone boundaries, authorizing methods of take, among others, to help achieve management goals and objectives for pronghorn antelope. Section 363 provides descriptions of hunt zone boundaries, season opening and closing dates, methods of take (e.g., general methods, archery only, apprentice), tag designations (buck, doe), tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), bag and possession limits, and special conditions for pronghorn antelope. To maintain appropriate harvest levels and hunting quality, tags must be adjusted periodically in response to dynamic environmental, biological, and social conditions.

The proposed changes focus on pronghorn antelope tag quotas under section 363(m). The last time these regulations were subject to major amendment was 2023-2024. The proposed amendments here represent the culmination of the Department's internal discussion regarding pronghorn antelope population status. The proposed changes are necessary to maintain sustainable hunt opportunity and manage harvest for the population size.

Background

The goal of the Department's pronghorn antelope program is to maintain viable, healthy pronghorn populations, provide a variety of recreational activities, including harvest opportunity, and to minimize conflicts with humans (Pyshora 1982, California Department of Fish and Game [CDFG] 2004). A limited number of pronghorn antelope hunting tags are offered annually via the Big Game Drawing, and public demand for pronghorn antelope hunting tags has annually exceeded tag availability for the last ten years. In addition to harvest opportunity, public pronghorn antelope hunting also provides data that enhances the Department's ability to monitor pronghorn antelope populations including spatial, age, genetic, and disease information.

Existing Authorities

Current statutory authorities focus mostly on the take and possession of animals and include:

F&G Code Section 200 provides the Commission with the power to regulate the take or possession of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles.

F&G Code Section 203 specifies that the Commission has authority to promulgate regulations concerning open and closed seasons, bag and possession limits, hunt zones, methods of take, and restrictions based on physical distinctions.

F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, animal welfare, and other pertinent facts.

F&G Code Section 325 provides conditions by which the Commission may adopt special hunting seasons, provide for increased bag limits, or remove sex restrictions.

F&G Code Section 331 provides guidelines for the issuance of pronghorn antelope hunting tags, fundraising tags, a non-resident tag, and applicable tag fees.

F&G Code Section 1050 describes the process and procedure for assigning fees to hunting entitlements.

F&G Code Section 3950 provides a definition for game mammals: deer, elk, prong-horned antelope, black and brown or cinnamon bears, mountain lions, jackrabbits, and varying hares, brush rabbits and pygmy rabbits, and tree squirrels. Nelson bighorn sheep are game mammals only for the purposes of sport hunting as described in F&G Code section 4902.

Current Regulations

Section 350 defines big game species.

Section 352 provides hunting and shooting hours on big game.

Section 353 provides methods that are authorized for taking big game.

Section 363 provides definitions, hunting zone descriptions, season opening and closing dates, tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), and bag and possession limits for pronghorn antelope hunting.

Proposed Regulations

The proposed regulations amend subsection 363(m) to potentially adjust hunting tag numbers for each of the six hunt zones (currently shown as ranges). Previous surveys have suggested declines in population of pronghorn antelope, and the Department reduced tag allocations for the 2023-24 hunt year. Periodic adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental, and biological conditions are necessary to maintain sustainable populations of pronghorn antelope and hunt opportunities, as well as keeping with management recommendations. The Department is prioritizing additional surveys in January and February of 2025 to continue to assess pronghorn antelope population status and will make a final recommendation following the completion of surveys and data analysis. Unfortunately, administrative procedures and the Fish and Game Code require the Commission to receive proposed changes to existing regulations prior the completion of surveys and analyses, thus necessitating a range of numbers with this Initial Statement of Reasons. Final proposed tag quotas would be provided with the Final Statement of Reasons.

Section 363 Pronghorn Antelope

Amend subsection 363(m) to modify tag quotas for archery-only season and general season pronghorn antelope Period 1 and Period 2 for buck hunts. Tag allocations may need to be adjusted to manage harvest following the completion of population surveys.

Table 1. 363 (m)

<i>Hunt Area</i>	<i>Archery-Only Season Buck</i>	<i>Archery-Only Season Doe</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Buck</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Doe</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Apprentice Either-Sex</i>	<i>General Season Period 2 Buck</i>	<i>General Season Period 2 Doe</i>	<i>Fundraising</i>
Zone 1 -- Mount Dome	0	0	2 [0-2]	0	N/A	0	0	0
Zone 2 -- Clear Lake	4 [0-1]	0	12 [0-12]	0	N/A	0	0	0
Zone 3 -- Likely Tables	5 [0-5]	0	5 [0-5]	0	5 [0-5]	5 [0-5]	0	0
Zone 4 -- Lassen	5 [0-5]	0	35 [0-35]	0	5 [0-5]	35 [0-35]	0	0
Zone 5 -- Big Valley	4 [0-1]	0	5 [0-5]	0	4 [0-1]	0	0	0
Zone 6 -- Surprise Valley	4 [0-1]	0	10 [0-10]	0	4 [0-4]	0	0	0

Zones 1-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
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(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The proposed regulations will contribute to the sustainable management of pronghorn antelope populations in California. Population objectives are maintained and managed in part by periodically modifying the number of hunting tags distributed.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Authority: 200, 204, 219, 331, and 1050, Fish and Game Code

Reference: 331, 1050, 10500, and 10502, Fish and Game Code

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

- Report to follow completion of winter surveys in February 2025

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

- Wildlife Resources Committee, May 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, September 2024

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the outstanding issues concerning the tag quotas in subsection 363(m) would remain unaddressed. Retaining the current number of tags for the hunts listed would not be responsive to changes in pronghorn population status. The pronghorn antelope management plan specifies objective levels for pronghorn numbers and the proportion of bucks in the herds. These numbers and ratios are maintained and managed in part by modifying the number of tags allocated for hunting. The “no change” alternative would not allow management of the desired proportion of bucks stated in the Pronghorn Antelope Management Plan (Pyshora 1982).

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed. The maximum number of tags available in the proposed range is at or below the number of tags analyzed in the 2004 Final Environmental Document Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

(b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs or businesses within the State; no significant impacts to the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California are anticipated because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to significantly stimulate demand for goods or services related to pronghorn antelope hunting. As previously mentioned, periodic or annual adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental, and biological conditions are necessary to maintain sustainable populations of pronghorn antelope and hunt opportunities, as well as keeping with management recommendations. If greater numbers of hunters visit the areas in the state with increased annual opportunities, businesses that provide goods and services to hunters could benefit from small increases in sales for that license year. The Commission does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety but anticipates benefits to the environment.

(c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business:

The Commission does not anticipate significant impacts on the representative private persons or businesses.

(d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

No new costs/savings or changes to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies. However, the Department may experience a change in tag sales that may prompt change to Department revenue (see STD399 and Addendum).

(e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

(f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None

(g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be

Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None

(h) Effect on Housing Costs: None

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

(a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

(b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state because the potential economic impacts of the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to pronghorn antelope hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state because the potential economic impacts of the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to pronghorn antelope hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and can be a family tradition and a bonding activity.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on worker safety.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in Fish and Game Code Section 1700, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of populations of pronghorn antelope to ensure their continued existence and supporting recreational opportunity. Adoption of scientifically-based pronghorn antelope seasons and tag quotas provides for the maintenance of pronghorn antelope populations to

ensure those objectives are met. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation.

(g) Other Benefits of the Regulation:

The Commission does not anticipate other benefits from the proposed regulation.

Proposed Regulatory Language

Section 363, Title 14, CCR, is amended as follows:

§ 363. Pronghorn Antelope.

The Lava Beds National Monument and Federal and State Game Refuges lying within a given pronghorn hunt boundary are closed to pronghorn antelope hunting, except for the state's Hayden Hill (1S) and Blacks Mountain (1F) game refuges in Lassen County and the Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Modoc County. Refer to subsection 363(b)(5) for special conditions for permission to enter and hunt pronghorn antelope in the Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

(a) Zone 1 (Mount Dome):

[No change to subsection (a). . .]

(b) Zone 2 (Clear Lake):

[No change to subsection (b). . .]

(c) Zone 3 (Likely Tables):

[No change to subsection (c). . .]

(d) Zone 4 (Lassen):

[No change to subsection (d). . .]

(e) Zone 5 (Big Valley):

[No change to subsection (e). . .]

(f) Zone 6 (Surprise Valley):

[No change to subsection (f). . .]

(g) Big Valley Pronghorn Antelope Apprentice Hunt:

[No change to subsection (g). . .]

(h) Lassen Pronghorn Antelope Apprentice Hunt:

[No change to subsection (h). . .]

(i) Surprise Valley Pronghorn Antelope Apprentice Hunt:

[No change to subsection (i). . .]

(j) Likely Tables Pronghorn Antelope Apprentice Hunt

[No change to subsection (j). . .]

(k) Fundraising Hunt:

[No change to subsection (k). . .]

(l) Conditions:

[No change to subsection (l). . .]

(m) Pronghorn Antelope Tag Allocations Table.

<i>Hunt Area</i>	<i>Archery-Only Season Buck</i>	<i>Archery-Only Season Doe</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Buck</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Doe</i>	<i>General Season Period 1 Apprentice Either-Sex</i>	<i>General Season Period 2 Buck</i>	<i>General Season Period 2 Doe</i>	<i>Fundraising</i>
Zone 1 -- Mount Dome	0	0	2 [0-2]	0	N/A	0	0	0
Zone 2 -- Clear Lake	4 [0-1]	0	12 [0-12]	0	N/A	0	0	0
Zone 3 -- Likely Tables	5 [0-5]	0	5 [0-5]	0	5 [0-5]	5 [0-5]	0	0
Zone 4 -- Lassen	5 [0-5]	0	35 [0-35]	0	5 [0-5]	35 [0-35]	0	0
Zone 5 -- Big Valley	4 [0-1]	0	5 [0-5]	0	4 [0-1]	0	0	0
Zone 6 -- Surprise Valley	4 [0-1]	0	10 [0-10]	0	4 [0-4]	0	0	0
Zones 1-6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Authority cited: Sections 219, 265, 331 and 1050, Fish and Game Code. Reference: Sections 331, 713 and 1050, Fish and Game Code.

Addendum to the
2004 Final Environmental Document
Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting
prepared by the
State of California
Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
on behalf of
California Fish and Game Commission
as
Lead Agency under the
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
for the

REGULARLY NOTICED RULEMAKING ACTION TO AMEND
SECTION 363 PRONGHORN ANTELOPE HUNTS
TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS
2025 HUNTING SEASON
(OAL Notice File No. **Z2025-0107-03**)

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., to inform consideration by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) of proposed amendments to existing regulations governing pronghorn antelope hunting in California. (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 363). Fish and Game Code (F&G Code), Section 3950 designates pronghorn antelope as a game mammal in California. F&G Code, Sections 203 and 331, authorize the Commission to fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of pronghorn antelope that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for pronghorn antelope. The Commission establishes pronghorn antelope hunting tag quotas through regulations amended annually, as needed, based on current population estimates derived from annual surveys by CDFW.

The Commission serves as the CEQA lead agency when it promulgates and amends the pronghorn antelope hunting regulations. (Pub. Resources Code, Section 21067; CEQA Guidelines Section 15367.)¹ The Commission established maximum tag quotas for all pronghorn antelope hunting zones in California in 2004 with, among other things, the certification of a Final Environmental Document under CEQA (2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED) (SCH No. 2003112078). The 2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED provides relevant and important informational value as the Commission as CEQA lead agency considers proposed amendments to the existing regulations for the 2025 pronghorn antelope hunting season in California. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects.

EARLIER PROJECT APPROVAL

CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (see generally California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 781.5 and Section 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of discretionary projects they propose to carry out or approve, including promulgating regulations, which may have potential to significantly affect the environment.

¹ The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with Section 15000.

In 2004, the Commission certified a Final Environmental Document Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting (2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED) (SCH No. 2003112078) as the lead agency under CEQA as part of the Commission's review and adoption of the Pronghorn antelope Hunting regulations.

In 2024, the Commission amended pronghorn antelope hunting tag quotas in the Clear Lake Hunt Zone (reduced by 3 general tags), Likely Tables Hunt Zone (reduced 40 general tags across two hunt periods, and 10 archery tags), and the Big Valley Hunt Zone (reduced by 15 tags). The combined reduction of 68 tags was in response to low abundance due to a severe winter.

PROPOSED 2025 TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR PRONGHORN ANTELOPE HUNTING

The pronghorn antelope tag quotas described in the 2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED are the basis for the number of tags currently allocated to all zones in regulation. Periodic adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental and biological conditions are necessary to maintain sustainable populations of pronghorn antelope and hunt opportunities, as well as keeping with mandates and management recommendations.

Amendments of tag quotas for the 2025 pronghorn antelope hunting season by the Commission are based on survey data collected by the Department in its annual survey efforts. The Department conducted helicopter surveys in February 2025 to continue to assess the population status of pronghorn antelope in California. Results indicate that pronghorn populations continue to decline across most of their range in northeast California, particularly in the Clear Lake and Likely Tables hunt zones. For 2025 the Department is recommending a reduction in these two hunt zones by 15 for Likely Tables and 6 for Clear Lake (Table 1).

Table 1. Proposed Tag Allocations for Pronghorn Antelope Hunting

Hunt Code	Hunt Zone	Tag Description	2024 Allocation	2025 Recommendation
710	Zone 1 - Mount Dome	General - Buck	2	2
720	Zone 2 - Clear Lake	General - Buck	12	6
728	Zone 2 - Clear Lake	Archery - Buck	1	1
730	Zone 3 - Likely Tables	General - Buck - Period 1	5	5
732	Zone 3 - Likely Tables	General - Buck - Period 2	5	0
738	Zone 3 - Likely Tables	Archery - Buck	5	0
734	Zone 3 - Likely Tables	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	0
740	Zone 4 - Lassen	General - Buck - Period 1	35	35

Hunt Code	Hunt Zone	Tag Description	2024 Allocation	2025 Recommendation
742	Zone 4 - Lassen	General - Buck - Period 2	35	35
745	Zone 4 - Lassen	Archery - Buck	5	5
790	Zone 4 - Lassen	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	5
750	Zone 5 - Big Valley	General - Buck	5	5
755	Zone 5 - Big Valley	Archery - Buck	1	1
780	Zone 5 - Big Valley	Apprentice - Either-sex	1	1
760	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	General - Buck	10	10
765	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	Archery - Buck	1	1
766	Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	Apprentice - Either-sex	4	4

Total 2024 Allocation: 137

Total 2025 Recommendation: 116

The 2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED found no significant impacts for a range of pronghorn antelope tags. The tag recommendations for pronghorn antelope fall within the range of numbers analyzed in the 2004 Final Environmental Document Regarding Pronghorn Antelope Hunting. Reducing hunt tag numbers will not cause any new or significant impacts.

NO SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code, Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that, where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (California Code Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
 - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
 - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
 - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.

- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
 - A subsequent ED is not required.
 - Only minor changes to the project are described.
 - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
 - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.
 - The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

NO ADDITIONAL IMPACTS UNDER CEQA

The Commission has determined that amending the current pronghorn antelope hunting regulations based on annual survey results will not result in any new or significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2004 Pronghorn antelope ED for this project.

This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species.

This approval action adjusts the previous year tag quotas based on more current population information. There are no new significant or substantially more severe impacts caused due to these changes.

AMENDMENT OF THE PRONGHORN ANTELOPE HUNT REGULATIONS

In conclusion, the Commission finds that amending the pronghorn antelope hunt regulations in CCR, Title 14, Section 363, will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2004 Pronghorn Antelope ED. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to the CCR, Title 14, Section 15164, in connection with this proposed action.

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission

Date

State of California
Fish and Game Commission
Initial Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action

Amend Sections 364 and 364.1
Title 14, California Code of Regulations
Re: Elk Hunting

I. Date of Initial Statement of Reasons:

II. Dates and Locations of Scheduled Hearings

(a) Notice Hearing:

Date: December 12, 2024

Location: Sacramento, CA

(b) Discussion Hearing:

Date: February 12, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

(c) Adoption Hearing:

Date: April 16, 2025

Location: Sacramento, CA

III. Description of Regulatory Action

(a) Statement of Specific Purpose of Regulatory Change and Factual Basis for Determining that Regulation Change is Reasonably Necessary

Unless otherwise specified, all section references in this document are to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) periodically considers the recommendations of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) in amending elk hunting regulations. Considerations include recommendations for adjusting tag quotas, setting hunt periods, modifying area boundaries, authorizing methods of take, among others, to help achieve management goals and objectives for elk. Section 364 provides descriptions of hunt area boundaries, season opening and closing dates, methods of take (e.g., general methods, archery only, apprentice), tag designations (bull, spike bull, antlerless, either-sex), tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), bag and possession limits, and special conditions for elk. To maintain appropriate harvest levels and hunting quality, tags must be adjusted periodically in response to dynamic environmental, biological, and social conditions.

Elk populations have been steadily increasing, especially in the northwestern areas of the state. In some Elk Management Units (EMUs) elk conflict has reached intolerable levels causing property damage and loss. Additionally, in the Lake Pillsbury EMU the local carrying capacity is estimated to be reduced following a planned dam removal.

The proposed changes focus on adding three archery-only elk hunts in Section 364(r), identifying corresponding tag quotas and hunt seasons for each in Section 364(w), amending existing tag quotas and seasons in Section 364 (u), extending a hunt season for SHARE elk hunts in conflict zones in Section 364.1, and expanding the Bear Valley SHARE elk hunt tag allotment. The last time these regulations were subject to major amendment was 2023-2024. The proposed amendments here represent the cumulation of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (Department) internal discussion as well as input from hunting constituents. The proposed changes expand on and maintain sustainable hunt opportunities, and are consistent with management unit plan recommendations and Fish and Game Code.

Background

Current regulations in Section 364 specify elk tag quotas for each hunt area and establish hunt area boundaries in accordance with management goals and objectives described in the Department's Elk Conservation and Management Plan (2018). Similarly, current regulations in Section 364.1 specify elk tag quotas for each hunt area that may be distributed to the public to allow access to hunt elk on specific properties that enter the Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) program. A limited number of public elk hunting tags are offered annually via the Big Game Drawing and SHARE program drawing, and public demand for elk hunting tags (as indicated by elk tag draw applications) has annually exceeded tag availability for the last ten years. Regulated hunting is the recommended primary method of population control to alleviate elk conflict, as described in the Department's Elk Conservation and Management Plan (2018). In addition to harvest opportunity, public elk hunting also provides data that enhances the Department's ability to monitor elk populations including spatial, age, genetic, and disease information. As described in the Department's Elk Conservation and Management Plan (2018), the Department's goal is to increase elk hunting opportunities where feasible and compatible with population objectives, in which case recommendations will be offered to the Commission.

A central theme in Commission Petition 2021-017 is to increase hunting opportunities where feasible, including archery only opportunities. The Commission adopted the Department's recommendation to grant in part and deny in part by the Commission on February 8, 2023, and the Department has incorporated some of the granted requests into this rulemaking. The department has received various public comments (President of the California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association (CBH/SAA), Chris Bowles, and Bill Gaines speaking on behalf of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and CBH/SAA, Fish and Game Commission Meeting, December 2023) from constituents to apply hunting, including archery only methods, to address elk conflict, a concept which is consistent with the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW 2018). Comments also appealed that the Department consider temporally spacing opportunities to manage crowding and enhance hunter satisfaction (Fish and Game Commission Meeting, February 2024).

Existing Authorities

Current statutory authorities focus mostly on the take and possession of animals and include:

F&G Code Section 200 provides the Commission with the power to regulate the take or possession of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and reptiles.

F&G Code Section 203 specifies that the Commission has authority to promulgate regulations concerning open and closed seasons, bag and possession limits, hunt zones, methods of take, and restrictions based on physical distinctions.

F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, animal welfare, and other pertinent facts.

F&G Code Section 325 provides conditions by which the Commission may adopt special hunting seasons, provide for increased bag limits, or remove sex restrictions.

F&G Code Section 332 provides guidelines for the issuance of elk hunting tags, fundraising tags, a non-resident tag, and applicable tag fees.

F&G Code Section 1050 describes the process and procedure for assigning fees to hunting entitlements.

F&G Code Sections 1570-1577 establish the SHARE program and SHARE account, provide definitions, and permit voluntary agreements with landowners.

F&G Code Section 3950 provides a definition for game mammals: deer, elk, prong-horned antelope, black and brown or cinnamon bears, mountain lions, jackrabbits, and varying hares, brush rabbits and pygmy rabbits, and tree squirrels. Nelson bighorn sheep are game mammals only for the purposes of sport hunting as described in F&G Code section 4902.

F&G Code Section 3951 grants the Commission authority to promulgate regulations regarding the take and relocation of tule elk and mandates that the number of tule elk in the Owens Valley may not increase beyond 490.

F&G Code Section 3952 directs the Department to develop a statewide management plan that considers: geographic range of each elk subspecies, habitat conditions, human-wildlife conflict, alleviation of property damage, population viability; identifies high priority areas; and describes requirements for individual herd management plans.

F&G Code section 4180 provides guidelines for the taking of fur-bearing mammals injuring property.

Current Regulations

Section 265 provides criteria and limitations for the use of dogs for the take of deer during general methods seasons.

Section 350 defines big game species.

Section 352 provides hunting and shooting hours on big game.

Section 353 provides methods that are authorized for taking big game.

Section 364 provides definitions, hunting zone descriptions, season opening and closing dates, tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), and bag and possession limits for elk hunting.

Section 364.1 provides season opening and closing dates, methods of take, application instructions, tag quotas (total number of hunting tags to be made available), and bag and possession limits for Department administered Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) elk hunts.

Individuals are awarded an elk hunting tag through the Department's Big Game Drawing or SHARE hunt program drawing. Harvest of an elk is authorized for an individual awarded a tag for a respective hunt or SHARE property, and season. Tag quotas are established based on a variety of factors including population density and abundance, age and sex composition, elk distribution, and human-elk conflict levels, among other population objectives, factors, and considerations.

Proposed Regulations

The Department has identified several EMUs where increased public elk hunting opportunities under Section 364 and Section 364.1 are feasible and are supported by management objectives.

The proposed changes to sections 364 and 364.1 have been developed to increase hunter opportunity while allowing the Department to manage for sound biological levels by adding archery-only hunts, adjusting tag quotas (most shown as ranges), and extending the SHARE hunt season in identified conflict areas. The proposed regulations comply with the Department's Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW 2018). Periodic adjustments of tag quotas or addition of hunts in response to dynamic environmental and biological conditions, and human-wildlife conflict are necessary to maintain hunt opportunities and keep with management ratios and recommendations. Surveys through the winter would continue to assess population status and will help inform final quota recommendations upon completion of data analysis. Unfortunately, administrative procedures and the Fish and Game Code require the Commission to receive proposed changes to existing regulations prior the completion of surveys and analyses, thus necessitating a range of numbers with this Initial Statement of Reasons. Final proposed tag quotas would be provided with the Final Statement of Reasons.

Section 364 Elk Hunts, Seasons, and Number of Tags

Add subsection 364(f)(7) to add an archery only elk hunt in the Central Coast Hunt area (CDFW Region 4). The elk population in the Central Coast EMU exceeds the population objective per the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW 2018) and is continuing to grow. The proposal is necessary to manage the increasing population and provide hunter opportunity, consistent with management objectives. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Add subsection 364(f)(8) to add an archery only elk hunt in the La Panza Hunt area (CDFW Region 4). The elk population in the La Panza EMU exceeds the population objective per the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW 2018) and is continuing to grow. The proposal is necessary to manage the increasing population and

provide hunter opportunity, consistent with management objectives. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Add subsection 364(f)(9) to add an archery only elk hunt in the Siskiyou Hunt area (CDFW Region 1). The Siskiyou EMU elk population can sustain additional harvest. The proposal is necessary to add additional hunt opportunities supported by the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW 2018) objectives. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Amend 364(s)(2)(A) to increase bull tags in the General Methods Tehachapi Hunt (CDFW Region 4). The current tag allocation is 5 bull tags and 10 antlerless tags. The Tehachapi Hunt was established in the 2023 hunting season to mitigate increased abundance of non-native Rocky Mountain elk. These non-native elk were introduced as part of a fenced game farming operation in 1967; elk subsequently escaped the enclosure and have since increased in abundance and expanded their range beyond Tejon Ranch into surrounding communities in Kern County and the Southern Sierras.

Human-elk conflict has exceeded tolerable levels in some areas. Current abundance levels are above objectives outlined in the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW, 2018). Observed bull:cow ratios (47mm:100ff) are also above the Elk Conservation and Management Plan objective (25mm:100ff). Continued range expansion may result in non-native Rocky Mountain elk overlapping with endemic tule elk in the Owens Valley, resulting in hybridization between the two subspecies. This presents a threat to genetic integrity of the endemic tule elk population, and it is desirable to prevent hybridization between these subspecies from occurring as described in the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW, 2018).

To help address these concerns for the Tejon Elk Management Unit, the Department recommends increasing bull tags and reduce the likelihood of dispersing bulls in the Tehachapi Rocky Mountain General Methods Hunt to help achieve goals and objectives outlined in the Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW, 2018).

Amend subsection 364(u)4(A) to increase the bull tags in the General Methods Gabilan Hunt (CDFW Region 4). The current tag allocation is 4, the proposal would increase the allocation by up to 6 bull tags. Continued population monitoring suggests the population can sustain increased take. A final tag quota recommendation will follow the completion of surveys and data analysis. The proposal is supported by Elk Conservation and Management Plan (CDFW, 2018) objectives and is necessary to pace harvest levels with population size. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Amend subsection 364(u)(18) to add new periods and increase the Lake Pillsbury bull and antlerless tag quotas (CDFW Region 2). There are currently two hunt periods: the first period (u)(18)(A) with 4 antlerless tags, and the second period (u)(18)(B) with 2 bull tags. The proposal would adjust the 2 bull tags to 0-4 antlerless tags, and adjust the season accordingly to fit in the hunts without overlap, and add 3 hunt periods (u)(18)(C), (u)(18)(D), and (u)(18)(E) for Lake Pillsbury.

New subsections (u)(18)(C), (u)(18)(D), and (u)(18)(E) add 0-8 antlerless tags, and add 0-2 bull tags in succession from second Saturday in September through October as additional hunt opportunities. Scott Dam, which creates Lake Pillsbury, will be decommissioned and reduce carrying capacity in the EMU. The proposal is necessary to reduce elk population size as dam removal approaches. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Add subsection 364(w)(7)-(9) to identify the novel archery only elk hunts described above for 364(f) for Central Coast Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt, La Panza Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt, and Siskiyou Archery Only Roosevelt Elk Hunt. These amendments are necessary to identify tag allocations and seasons for the proposed archery hunts.

Section 364.1 Department Administered Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Elk Hunts

Amend 364.1(a) to extend the SHARE elk hunt season in two conflict zones (subsections 364(a)(2)(A) Northwestern Hunt Zone and 364(c)(1)(A) Mendocino Hunt Zone), as described in Section 555.1. The existing season opens August 15 and continues through January 31. The proposal would extend this season from July 1 to June 30, extending it from 4.5 months to year-round. The proposal is necessary to address intolerable levels of elk conflict in conflict zones. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Amend subsection 364.1(l)(17) to increase the antlerless tags SHARE tag allotment for the Bear Valley Hunt (CDFW Region 2). There is currently 1 SHARE antlerless tag for Bear Valley, and the proposal would add 0-6 antlerless tags. This change is necessary to add veritable hunt opportunities to the Bear Vally EMU, where the elk population heavily occupies private land versus public land. The proposal is also responsive to hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

Other changes

F&G Code Section 325 is proposed to be added to the authority section cited for Section 364 and as a reference for Section 364.1 to support the need to reduce elk numbers in certain areas.

(b) Goals and Benefits of the Regulation

The proposed regulations will contribute to the sustainable management of elk populations in California. Population objectives are maintained and managed in part by periodically modifying the number of hunting tags distributed. The proposed regulations will provide additional elk hunting opportunities and alleviate elk conflict.

(c) Authority and Reference Sections from Fish and Game Code for Regulation

Section 364

Authority: 200, 203, 203.1, 265, 325, 332, and 1050, Fish and Game Code

Reference: 332, 1050, 1570, 1571, 1573, and 1574, Fish and Game Code

Section 364.1

Authority: Sections 332 and 1050, Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 332, 1050 and 1574, Fish and Game Code.

(d) Specific Technology or Equipment Required by Regulatory Change: None

(e) Identification of Reports or Documents Supporting Regulation Change

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. (2018). Elk Conservation and Management Plan: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=162912&inline>
- Petition 2021-017: [January 13, 2022 Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting Binder](#)

(f) Public Discussions of Proposed Regulations Prior to Notice Publication

- Petition 2021-017 Elk Workshop, January 2022
- Wildlife Resources Committee, May 2024
- Wildlife Resources Committee, September 2024

IV. Description of Reasonable Alternatives to Regulatory Action

(a) Alternatives to Regulation Change

No alternatives were identified by or brought to the attention of Commission staff that would have the same desired regulatory effect.

(b) No Change Alternative

Without the proposed changes, the outstanding issues concerning the regulations currently governing 364 and 364.1 would remain unaddressed. Retaining the current number of tags for the hunts listed would not be responsive to changes in population status or levels of human-elk conflict.

V. Mitigation Measures Required by Regulatory Action

The proposed regulatory action will have no negative impact on the environment; therefore, no mitigation measures are needed.

VI. Impact of Regulatory Action

The potential for significant statewide adverse economic impacts that might result from the proposed regulatory action has been assessed, and the following initial determinations relative to the required statutory categories have been made:

(a) Significant Statewide Adverse Economic Impact Directly Affecting Businesses, Including the Ability of California Businesses to Compete with Businesses in Other States

The proposed action will not have a significant statewide adverse economic impact directly affecting business, including the ability of California businesses to compete with businesses in other states. The proposed action adjusts tag quotas for existing hunts and expands certain hunt opportunities. Given the number of tags available and the area over which they are distributed, these proposals are economically neutral to business.

- (b) Impact on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State, the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses, or the Expansion of Businesses in California; Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents, Worker Safety, and the State's Environment

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs or businesses within the State; no significant impacts to the creation of new business, the elimination of existing businesses, or the expansion of businesses in California are anticipated because the expected economic impacts of the proposed regulations are unlikely to be substantial enough to significantly stimulate demand for goods or services related to elk hunting. As previously mentioned, periodic or annual adjustments of tag quotas in response to dynamic environmental, biological, or social conditions are necessary to maintain hunt opportunities, as well as keeping with management recommendations. If greater numbers of hunters visit the areas in the state with increased annual opportunities, businesses that provide goods and services to elk hunters could benefit from small increases in sales for that license year. The Commission does not anticipate direct benefits to the general health and welfare of California residents or to worker safety but anticipates benefits to the environment.

- (c) Cost Impacts on a Representative Private Person or Business:

The Commission does not anticipate significant impacts on the representative private persons or businesses.

- (d) Costs or Savings to State Agencies or Costs/Savings in Federal Funding to the State:

No new costs/savings or changes to federal funding are anticipated for state agencies. However, the Department is projected to experience higher elk tag sales that may result in revenue increases (see STD399 and Addendum).

- (e) Nondiscretionary Costs/Savings to Local Agencies: None

- (f) Programs Mandated on Local Agencies or School Districts: None

- (g) Costs Imposed on Any Local Agency or School District that is Required to be Reimbursed Under Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4, Government Code: None

- (h) Effect on Housing Costs: None

VII. Economic Impact Assessment

- (a) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation or Elimination of Jobs Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation or elimination of jobs within the state.

- (b) Effects of the Regulation on the Creation of New Businesses or the Elimination of Existing Businesses Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the creation of new businesses or the elimination of existing businesses within the state because the potential economic impacts of

the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas or hunts change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to elk hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(c) Effects of the Regulation on the Expansion of Businesses Currently Doing Business Within the State

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on the expansion of businesses currently doing business within the state because the potential economic impacts of the proposed regulations vary annually as tag quotas or hunts change, and are unlikely to be substantial enough to stimulate demand for goods or services related to elk hunting in the long run due to annual variability.

(d) Benefits of the Regulation to the Health and Welfare of California Residents

Hunting is an outdoor activity that can provide several health and welfare benefits to California residents. Hunters and their families benefit from fresh game to eat, and from the benefits of outdoor recreation, including exercise. People who hunt have a special connection with the outdoors and an awareness of the relationships between wildlife, habitat, and humans, and can be a family tradition and a bonding activity. Where feasible, regulated hunting is also a direct means of addressing elk conflict on private lands and meeting hunter requests for new hunting opportunities.

(e) Benefits of the Regulation to Worker Safety

The Commission does not anticipate impacts on worker safety.

(f) Benefits of the Regulation to the State's Environment

As set forth in Fish and Game Code section 1700, it is the policy of the state to encourage the conservation, maintenance, and utilization of fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all the citizens of the state. The objectives of this policy include, but are not limited to, the maintenance of populations of elk to ensure their continued existence and supporting recreational opportunity. Adoption of scientifically-based elk seasons and tag quotas provides for the maintenance of elk populations to ensure those objectives are met. The fees that hunters pay for licenses and tags help fund wildlife conservation.

Proposed Regulatory Language

Section 364, Title 14, CCR, is amended as follows:

§ 364. Elk Hunts, Seasons, and Number of Tags.

[No changes to subsections (a) through (e). . .]

(f) Department Administered Archery Only Elk Hunts:

(1) Northeastern Archery Only Rocky Mountain Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(b)(1)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(2) Owens Valley Multiple Zone Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in Bishop, Independence, Lone Pine, and Goodale, as described in subsections 364(d)(5)(A), (d)(6)(A), (d)(7)(A) and (d)(12)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(3) Lone Pine Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(7)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(4) Tinemaha Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(8)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(5) Whitney Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(11)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(6) Fort Hunter Liggett General Public Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(14)(A).

(B) Special Conditions:

1. See subsection 364(p).
2. Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(7) Central Coast Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(3)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(8) La Panza Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(2)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

(9) Siskiyou Archery Only Roosevelt Elk Hunt:

(A) Area: The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(a)(1)(A).

(B) Special Conditions: Elk may be taken with Archery Equipment only as specified in Section 354.

[. . . No changes to subsections (g) through (r). . .]

(s) Department Administered General Methods Rocky Mountain Elk Hunts

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(1)(A)	Northeastern Bull	15	0	0	0	Shall open on the Wednesday preceding the third Saturday in September and continue for 12 consecutive days.
(1)(B)	Northeastern Antlerless	0	10	0	0	Shall open on the second Wednesday in November and continue for 12 consecutive days.
(2)(A)	Tehachapi	5 <u>[5-10]</u>	10	0	0	Shall open on the first Saturday in September and continue for 30 consecutive days.

[. . . No changes to subsection (t). . .]

(u) Department Administered General Methods Tule Elk Hunts

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(1)(A)	Cache Creek Bull	2	0	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in October and continue for 16 consecutive days.
(1)(B)	Cache Creek Antlerless	0	2	0	0	Shall open on the third Saturday in October and continue for 16 consecutive days.

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(2)(A)	La Panza Period 1	6	5	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in October and continue for 23 consecutive days.
(2)(B)	La Panza Period 2	6	6	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in November and continue for 23 consecutive days.
(3)(A)	Central Coast	10	10	0	0	Shall open on the first Saturday in October and continue for 60 consecutive days.
(4)(A)	Gabilan	4 <u>[4-10]</u>	6	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in November and continue for 23 consecutive days.

[. . . No changes to subsections (u)(5) through (u)(17). . .]

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(18)(A)	Lake Pillsbury Period 1	0	4 <u>[0-4]</u>	0	0	<p>Shall open on the Wednesday preceding the second Saturday in September and continue for ten consecutive days.</p> <p><u>Shall open on the last Saturday in August and continue for seven consecutive days.</u></p>
(18)(B)	Lake Pillsbury Period 2	2 <u>0</u>	0 <u>[0-4]</u>	0	0	<p>Shall open on the Monday following the fourth Saturday in September and continue for ten consecutive days.</p> <p><u>Shall open on the first Saturday in September and continue for seven consecutive days.</u></p>
(18)(C)	<u>Lake Pillsbury Period 3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>[0-4]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on the second Saturday in September and continue for seven consecutive days.</u>
(18)(D)	<u>Lake Pillsbury Period 4</u>	<u>[0-2]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on the fourth Saturday in September and continue for seven consecutive days.</u>

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(18)(E)	<u>Lake Pillsbury Period 5</u>	<u>[0-2]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on the first Saturday in October and continue for seven consecutive days.</u>

[. . . No changes to subsections (u)(19) through (u)(20). . .]

(w) Department Administered Archery Only Hunts

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(1)(A)	Northeastern Archery Only	0	0	10	0	Shall open on the Wednesday preceding the first Saturday in September and continue for 12 consecutive days.
(2)(A)	Owens Valley Multiple Zone Archery Only	3	0	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in August and continue for nine consecutive days.
(3)(A)	Lone Pine Archery Only Period 1	0	1	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in September and continue for 16 consecutive days.
(4)(A)	Tinemaha Archery Only Period 1	0	0	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in September and continue for 16 consecutive days.

§	Hunt	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	5. Season
(5)(A)	Whitney Archery Only Period 1	0	0	0	0	Shall open on the second Saturday in September and continue for 16 consecutive days.
(6)(A)	Fort Hunter Liggett General Public Archery Only Either Sex	0	0	6	0	Shall open on the last Saturday in July and continue for nine consecutive days.
(6)(B)	Fort Hunter Liggett General Public Archery Only Antlerless	0	8	0	0	Shall open on the first Saturday in November and continue for nine consecutive days.
<u>(7)</u>	<u>Central Coast Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt</u>	<u>[0-5]</u>	<u>[0-5]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on September 1 and continue until September 30.</u>
<u>(8)</u>	<u>La Panza Archery Only Tule Elk Hunt</u>	<u>[0-5]</u>	<u>[0-5]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on September 1 and continue until September 30.</u>
<u>(9)</u>	<u>Siskiyou Archery Only Roosevelt Elk Hunt</u>	<u>[0-10]</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>Shall open on the fourth Wednesday in August and continue until the second Tuesday in September.</u>

Authority cited: Sections 200, 203, 203.1, 265, 325, 332 and 1050, Fish and Game Code.

Reference: Sections 332, 1050, 1570, 1571, 1572, 1573 and 1574, Fish and Game Code.

Section 364.1, Title 14, California Code of Regulations, is amended as follows:

§ 364.1. Department Administered Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) Elk Hunts.

(a) Season: The overall season shall open on August 15 and continue through January 31. The season in conflict zones, as identified in Section 555.1 with the exception of 364(b)(2)(A), shall open on July 1 and continue through June 30. Individual SHARE properties will be assigned seasons corresponding with management goals.

[No change to subsections (b) through (k)...]

(l) Department Administered SHARE Tule Elk Hunts

§	(A) Hunts	1. Bull Tags	2. Antlerless Tags	3. Either-Sex Tags	4. Spike Tags	(B) Area
(1)	Cache Creek	2	1	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(1)(A).
(2)	La Panza	5	10	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(2)(A).
(3)	Central Coast	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(3)(A).
(4)	Gabilan	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(4)(A).
(5)	Bishop	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(5)(A).
(6)	Independence	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in

						subsection 364(d)(6)(A).
(7)	Lone Pine Period 2	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(7)(A).
(8)	Tinemaha	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(8)(A).
(9)	West Tinemaha	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(9)(A).
(10)	Tinemaha Mountain	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(10)(A).
(11)	Whitney	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(11)(A).
(12)	Goodale	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(12)(A).
(13)	Grizzly Island	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(13)(A).
(14)	Fort Hunter Liggett	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(14)(A).
(15)	East Park Reservoir	1	1	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in

						subsection 364(d)(15)(A).
(16)	San Luis Reservoir	2	3	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(16)(A).
(17)	Bear Valley	2	4 <u>[0-6]</u>	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(17)(A).
(18)	Lake Pillsbury	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(18)(A).
(19)	Santa Clara	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(19)(A).
(20)	Alameda	0	0	0	0	The tag shall be valid in the area described in subsection 364(d)(20)(A).

Note: Authority cited: Sections 332 and 1050, Fish and Game Code.
Reference: Sections 332, 1050 and 1574, Fish and Game Code.

Addendum to the
2019 Supplemental Environmental Document
to the
2010 Final Environmental Document
Regarding Elk Hunting
prepared by the
State of California
Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
on behalf of
California Fish and Game Commission
as
Lead Agency under the
California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
for the

REGULARLY NOTICED RULEMAKING ACTION TO AMEND
SECTIONS 364 ELK AND 364.1 SHARE ELK
TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS
2025 HUNTING SEASON
(OAL Notice File No. **Z2025-0107-03**)

INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has prepared this addendum pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., to inform consideration by the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) of proposed amendments to existing regulations governing elk hunting in California (California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Sections 364 and 364.1). Fish and Game Code (F&G Code), Section 3950 designates elk as a game mammal in California. F&G Code, Sections 203 and 332, authorize the Commission to fix the area or areas, seasons and hours, bag and possession limit, sex, and total number of elk that may be taken pursuant to its regulations. F&G Code Section 203.1 requires the Commission to consider populations, habitat, food supplies, the welfare of individual animals, and other pertinent facts when establishing hunting regulations for elk. The Commission establishes elk hunting tag quotas through regulations amended annually, as needed, based on current population estimates derived from annual surveys by CDFW.

The Commission serves as the CEQA lead agency when it promulgates and amends the elk hunting regulations. (Pub. Resources Code, Section 21067; CEQA Guidelines Section 15367.)¹ The Commission established maximum tag quotas for all elk hunting zones in California in 2010 with, among other things, the certification of a Final Environmental Document under CEQA (2010 Elk ED) (SCH No. 200912083). The Commission amended the existing regulations in 2019 by, among other things, certifying a Final Supplemental Environmental Document under CEQA (2019 Elk SED) (SCH No. 2018112037). The 2010 Elk ED and the 2019 Elk SED provide relevant and important informational value as the Commission, as CEQA lead agency, considers proposed amendments to the existing regulations for the 2025 elk hunting season in California. This addendum documents the Commission's consideration of related environmental effects.

EARLIER PROJECT APPROVAL

CEQA review of the proposed project was conducted in accordance with the Commission's certified regulatory program approved by the Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.5 (See generally Title 14, CCR Sections 781.5 and 15251(b)). CEQA requires all public agencies in the State to evaluate the environmental impacts of discretionary projects they propose to carry out or approve, including promulgating regulations, which may have a potential to significantly affect the environment.

¹ The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

In 2010, the Commission certified a Final Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting (2010 Elk ED) (SCH No. 200912083) as the lead agency under CEQA as part of the Commission's review and adoption of the Elk Hunting regulations.

In 2019 the Commission amended the Elk Hunting regulations and certified a Final Supplemental Environmental Document Regarding Elk Hunting (2019 Elk SED) (SCH No. 2018112037) which focused on the potential for any new significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts from an increase in the tag quota range in the Northwestern Elk Zone (NW Zone). The Commission considered the proposed project increase of 27 General tags (6 bull and 21 antlerless) and three alternatives. The Commission as lead agency certified the SED and determined adoption of the amended regulations as proposed would not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously identified by the Commission in 2010. The Commission approved the increase of 15 General tags (8 bull, 6 antlerless, and 1 either-sex) for the 2020-21 elk hunting regulations. In 2023, the Commission amended the elk hunting tag quotas in the Siskiyou and Northwestern Hunt Zones, adding 10 antlerless and 22 bull General tags, respectively; modified the boundaries of the Bear Valley, Cache Creek, and La Panza Hunt Zone; and created the Gabilan, Central Coast, and Tehachapi Hunt Zones, adding 45 General elk tags (19 bull and 26 antlerless) across these new zones. The Commission approved the tag allocations, boundary modifications, and new hunt zones for the 2023-24 elk hunting regulations. In 2024, the Commission amended elk hunting tag quotas for Grizzly Island hunt in periods 10, 12, 13 by a total of 5 bull General tags, and hunt tag quotas for Siskiyou, Northwestern, Tehachapi, and Mendocino Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) elk hunts. Tehachapi and Northwest Elk Hunt Zones were designated conflict zones which allowed for increased landowner tags to be available.

PROPOSED 2025 GENERAL HUNT TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR GABILAN, LAKE PILLSBURY AND TEHACHAPI ELK HUNT ZONES

The proposed 2025 regulations include adjustments to general hunt tag allocations in the Gabilan, Lake Pillsbury, and Tehachapi Elk Hunt Zones (EHZs). These changes are informed by survey data collected annually by the Department and align with population management goals outlined in the 2010 Elk ED and consider environmental, biological, and social factors.

The Department is recommending an increase of 6 bull tags in Gabilan EHZ for general hunts. This change is supported by survey data indicating the population is increasing and can sustain proportional additional harvest without significant impacts.

In the Lake Pillsbury EHZ, the Department is recommending an increase of 2 bull and 4 antlerless tags. This adjustment reflects current population trends and anticipated

changes to habitat conditions in the region that do not represent a substantial change in light of the analyses in the 2010 and 2019 environmental documents.

In the Tehachapi EHZ, the Department is recommending 5 bull tags be added to the general hunt. This increase addresses management goals including potential genetic introgression of non-native Rocky Mountain elk with neighboring native tule elk and responds to stakeholder concerns over conflict in the area.

The elk tag quotas established in the 2010 Elk ED serve as the foundation for all current allocations. The proposed amendments will not result in any new significant or substantially severe impacts beyond those previously considered by the Commission because tag numbers fall below what was considered in the 2010 ED and the population of these herds has risen to a level that can sustain additional take.

PROPOSED 2025 ARCHERY-ONLY HUNT TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR CENTRAL COAST, LA PANZA, AND SISKIYOU ELK HUNT ZONES

The proposed 2025 regulations introduce archery-only seasons in the Central Coast, La Panza, and Siskiyou EHZs. These changes aim to provide additional hunting opportunities while adhering to the elk management objectives outlined in the 2010 Elk ED.

In the Central Coast EHZ, for the proposed archery-only season, the Department is recommending 5 bull and 5 antlerless tags. With this tag allocation, the Department aims to address an increasing elk population causing increased levels of conflict by increasing hunting opportunity.

In the La Panza EHZ the Department is recommending an archery-only season with 5 bull and 5 antlerless tags. This tag allocation reflects survey data that indicates an increasing elk population in the EHZ.

In the Siskiyou EHZ, the Department is recommending an archery-only season with 10 bull tags. This allocation accommodates population capacity and provides enhanced opportunities for archery hunters.

The tag quotas outlined in the 2010 Elk ED provide the basis for current allocations. Proposed amendments are based on annual surveys conducted by the Department and consider environmental, biological, and social factors. These amendments will not result in any new significant or substantially severe impacts beyond those previously evaluated by the Commission because tag numbers fall below what was considered in the 2010 ED and the population of these herds has risen to a level that can sustain additional take.

PROPOSED 2025 SHARE PROGRAM TAG ALLOCATIONS FOR BEAR VALLEY ELK HUNT ZONE

The proposed 2025 regulations include amendments to the SHARE program in the Bear Valley EHZ. These changes are informed by survey data collected annually by the Department and align with population management goals outlined in the 2010 Elk ED and consider environmental, biological, and social factors.

The SHARE program in the Bear Valley EHZ will see an increase of up to 5 antlerless tags. This change reflects annual survey data and enhances opportunities for private landowners enrolled in the SHARE program to help offset damage caused by elk in an area where public access is limited.

All current tag allocations are based on the quotas established in the 2010 Elk ED. The proposed amendments to the SHARE program will not result in any new significant or substantially severe impacts beyond those previously considered by the Commission because tag numbers fall below what was considered in the 2010 ED and the population of this herd has risen to a level that can sustain additional take.

PROPOSED 2025 EXTENDED SHARE HUNT SEASON IN THE NORTHWESTERN ELK HUNT ZONE

The proposed 2025 regulations include amendments to the SHARE program in the Northwestern EHZ. These changes are informed by survey data collected annually, disease monitoring, and conflict management by the Department and align with population management goals outlined in the 2010 Elk ED and consider environmental, biological, and social factors.

The SHARE program in the Northwestern EHZ will see an increase in duration, allowing harvest under a SHARE tag to occur year-round. This change reflects annual survey data, disease management goals (TAHD), and human-wildlife conflict mitigation goals, and will allow for more effective conflict determent through public harvest for private landowners enrolled in the SHARE program.

All current tag allocations are based on the quotas established in the 2010 Elk ED. The proposed amendments to the SHARE program will not result in any new significant or substantially severe impacts beyond those previously considered by the Commission because tag numbers fall below what was considered in the 2010 ED.

NO SUBSEQUENT ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT IS REQUIRED

In general, CEQA applies whenever a public agency proposes to carry out or approve a discretionary project. (Public Resources Code, Section 21080(a)). CEQA provides that,

where a public agency proposes to modify a previously approved project for which a Final Environmental Document was prepared and certified:

“The lead agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an **addendum** to a previously certified EIR if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.” (Title 14, CCR Section 15164)

- A Subsequent Environment Document (Section 15162) when there is substantial evidence that:
 - Substantial changes are proposed in the project, which will require major revisions to the previous environmental impact report (EIR) or environmental document (ED).
 - Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is being undertaken, which will require major revisions to the previous EIR or environmental documentation.
 - New information, which was not known and could not have been known at the time the previous EIR or ED was certified as complete, becomes available.
- A Supplement to an Environment Document (Section 15163) when:
 - A subsequent ED is not required.
 - Only minor changes to the project are described.
 - Only that information to make the ED adequate is provided.
- An Addendum to the Certified ED (Section 15164) is proper when:
 - The changes or additions presented in this project are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for preparation of a subsequent ED have occurred.
 - The Commission may properly prepare and may rely on an addendum in accordance with Section 15164 to fulfill its obligations under CEQA.

NO ADDITIONAL IMPACTS UNDER CEQA

The Commission has determined that amending the current elk hunting regulations based on annual survey results will not result in any new or significant or substantially more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2010 Elk ED and 2019 Elk SED for this project.

This project does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory. There are no impacts to the habitat of fish and wildlife species.

This approval action adjusts the previous year's tag quotas based on the most current population information and establishes three new hunt seasons. No other aspect of the project has changed. No new significant or substantially more severe impacts under CEQA will occur due to this change.

AMENDMENT OF THE ELK HUNT REGULATIONS

In conclusion, the Commission finds that amending the elk hunt regulations in CCR, Title 14, Section 364 and Section 364.1 will not result in any new significant or substantially more severe environmental effects than previously analyzed and disclosed in the 2010 Elk ED and the 2019 Elk SED. The Commission also finds that subsequent or supplemental review beyond this Addendum is not warranted pursuant to the CCR, Title 14, Section 15164, in connection with this proposed action.

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
California Fish and Game Commission

Date

Memorandum

Date: April 8, 2025

To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission

From: Charlton H. Bonham
Director

Subject: **Agenda Item for the April 16-17, 2025, Fish and Game Commission Meeting**
Re: Big Game Hunting and Deer Tagging, Reporting, and Testing Requirements
– Pre- Adoption Memo of Summarized Comments and Responses

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has prepared this Memorandum to summarize and provide responses to public comments received by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) on the proposed amendments to Sections 360, 362, 363, 364, 364.1, and 708.5 regarding proposing changes to bighorn sheep, pronghorn, elk hunts, Shared Habitat Alliance for Recreational Enhancement (SHARE) elk hunting, and deer tagging, reporting, and testing requirements. The Department received several comments, some outside of the scope of the proposals, others acknowledging the ongoing Chronic Wasting Disease outbreak, critiquing the Department's elk tag distribution, and cautioning against overharvesting deer in the D7 hunt zone in a late season hunt. The Department is not recommending any further amendments to the regulatory text based on comments received.

The Department recommends the Commission adopt the proposed rulemakings for deer, Nelson bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, elk hunting, SHARE elk hunting, and deer tagging and reporting. Where tag quotas were represented as ranges, the Department has finalized recommendations in Tables 1-7 below.

Table 1. Tag quota recommendation for proposed late season deer hunt, pertaining to Title 14 Section 360(c)(15).

Hunt	2025 Proposed Tag Range	2025 Recommended Tag Quota
G-40 (D-7 Late Season Buck Hunt)	0-50	25

Table 2. Tag quota recommendations for Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunting, pertaining to Title 14 Section 362(d).

Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones	2024 Tag Quota	2025 Proposed Tag Range	2025 Recommended Tag Quota
Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains	1	[0-5]	1
Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains	2	[0-4]	3
Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges	3	[0-4]	4
Zone 4 – Orocopia Mountains	1	[0-2]	1
Zone 5 – San Gorgonio Wilderness	0	[0-3]	1
Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains	1	[0-2]	1
Zone 7 – White Mountains	4	-	0
Zone 7 (Period 1) – White Mountains	-	[0-4]	3
Zone 7 (Period 2) – White Mountains	-	[0-4]	2
Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains	1	[0-3]	1
Zone 9 – Cady Mountains	2	[0-4]	2
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	6	-	0
Zone 10 (Period 1) – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	-	[0-7]	4
Zone 10 (Period 2) – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains	-	[0-7]	4
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	1	1	1
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1: Zone [1-10] (formerly Marble/Clipper/South Bristol Mountains Fundraising Tag)	0	[0-1]	1
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2: Zone [1-10] (formerly Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag)	1	[0-1]	1
Total:	23	[0-52]	30

Table 3. Tag quota recommendations for Pronghorn Antelope Hunting, pertaining to Title 14 Section 363(m).

Hunt Zone	Tag Description	2024 Tag Quota	2025 Proposed Tag Range	2025 Recommended Tag Quota
Zone 1 -	General - Buck	2	[0-2]	2
Zone 2 -	General - Buck	12	[0-12]	6
Zone 2 -	Archery - Buck	1	[0-1]	1
Zone 3 -	General - Buck - Period 1	5	[0-5]	5
Zone 3 -	General - Buck - Period 2	5	[0-5]	0

Hunt Zone	Tag Description	2024 Tag Quota	2025 Proposed Tag Range	2025 Recommended Tag Quota
Zone 3 -	Archery - Buck	5	[0-5]	0
Zone 3 -	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	[0-5]	0
Zone 4 -	General - Buck - Period 1	35	[0-35]	35
Zone 4 -	General - Buck - Period 2	35	[0-35]	35
Zone 4 -	Archery - Buck	5	[0-5]	5
Zone 4 -	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	[0-5]	5
Zone 5 - Big	General - Buck	5	[0-5]	5
Zone 5 - Big	Archery - Buck	1	[0-1]	1
Zone 5 - Big	Apprentice - Either-sex	1	[0-1]	1
Zone 6 -	General - Buck	10	[0-10]	10
Zone 6 -	Archery - Buck	1	[0-1]	1
Zone 6 -	Apprentice - Either-sex	4	[0-4]	4
Total		137	[0-137]	116

Table 4. Tag quota recommendation for Elk Hunting, pertaining to Title 14 Section 364(s) Department Administered General Methods Rocky Mountain Elk Hunts.

Hunt Zone	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Bull	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Antlerless	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Bull	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Antlerless
Tehachapi Hunt Zone	[5-10]	10	10	10

Table 5. Tag quota recommendation for Elk Hunting, pertaining to Title 14 Elk Hunting, Section 364(u) Department Administered General Methods Tule Elk Hunts.

Hunt Zone	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Bull	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Antlerless	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Bull	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Antlerless
Gabilan Hunt Zone	[4-10]	6	10	6
Lake Pillsbury Hunt Zone Period 1	0	[0-4]	0	4
Lake Pillsbury Hunt Zone Period 2	0	[0-4]	0	2
Lake Pillsbury Hunt Zone Period 3	0	[0-4]	0	2

Lake Pillsbury Hunt Zone Period 4	[0-2]	0	2	0
Lake Pillsbury Hunt Zone Period 5	[0-2]	0	2	0

Table 6. Tag quota recommendations for Elk Hunting, pertaining to Title 14 Section 364(w) Department Administered Archery Only Elk Hunts.

Hunt Zone	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Bull	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Antlerless	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Bull	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Antlerless
Central Coast Hunt Zone	[0-5]	[0-5]	5	5
La Panza Hunt Zone	[0-5]	[0-5]	5	5
Siskiyou Hunt Zone	[0-10]	0	10	0

Table 7. Tag quota recommendations for SHARE Elk Hunting, Section 364.1(l) Department Administered SHARE Tule Elk Hunts.

Hunt Zone	2025 Proposed Tag Range – Bull	2025 Proposed Tag Range –Antlerless	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Bull	2025 Recommended Tag Quota – Antlerless
Bear Valley Hunt Zone	2	[0-6]	2	6

If you have any questions on this item, please contact Scott Gardner, Wildlife Branch Chief, via phone at (916) 801-6257 or email at BigGame@wildlife.ca.gov.

Enclosure: Summarized Comments and Responses

cc: Chad Dibble, Deputy Director
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Scott Gardner, Branch Chief
Wildlife Branch

Robert Pelzman, Assistant Chief
Law Enforcement Division

Mario Klip, Game Conservation and Wildlife Connectivity Program Manager
Wildlife Branch

Melissa Miller-Henson, Executive Director
Fish and Game Commission
April 8, 2025
Page 5

Regina Vu, Regulations Specialist
Wildlife Branch

Ona Alminas, Env. Program Manager
Regulations Unit

Chelle Temple-King, Senior Regulatory Scientist
Regulations Unit
Wildlife and Fisheries Division

Dixie Van Allen, Program Manager
Fish and Game Commission

David Haug, Analyst
Fish and Game Commission

Ari Cornman, Wildlife Advisor
Fish and Game Commission

Attachment 1. Summarized comments and responses received regarding big game hunting and deer tagging, reporting, and testing requirements.

#	Name, Type, Date	Topic	Comment Summary	Response
1	John Wehausen, Email, 12/03/24	Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep	Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (SNBS) Foundation Newsletter summarizing work done by the SNBS Program in 2024 and the history of mountain lion management with regards to the SNBS Program.	Thank you for your comment. This subject falls outside of the scope of the proposed regulations for desert bighorn sheep.
2	David Coates, Email, 12/25/24	Sierra Nevada Bighorn sheep	Expressed concern about the impacts of mountain lions on bighorn sheep in the Eastern Sierra.	Thank you for your comment. This subject falls outside of the scope of the proposed regulations for desert bighorn sheep.
3	Brad Smith, Email, 12/9/2024	Elk	Appreciates the Department's science-based efforts to increase elk hunting opportunities.	Thank you for your comment.
4	Jeremy Rice, Email, 12/9/2024	Deer	The author suggests alternative hunting strategies for Yosemite deer, aiming for a more balanced impact on the population and potentially extending the hunting season for bowhunters.	Thank you for your comment. The Department is recommending a statistically conservative tag quota for this hunt and limiting the hunt area to the Madera County portions of D7.
5	Dan Ryan, Email, 12/9/2024	Deer and elk	The petitioner expresses gratitude to the agency and staff for their efforts in addressing the petition for new big game hunting opportunities. They commend the collaborative approach and the positive impact on the hunting community. While supportive of the proposed elk and deer hunts, the author seeks further clarification on the allocation of hunting tags to ensure a fair and equitable distribution.	Thank you for your support. For deer, data show that an increase of up to 25 tags reflects only a minor change in historical variability -- Between 2019 and 2023, the estimated average annual deer harvest in D7 was 751, with a standard deviation of 315.
6	Mike Costello, HOWL for Wildlife, Email, 12/9/2024	Elk and deer	HOWL for Wildlife supports several proposed wildlife regulations, including increased elk hunting opportunities, adjusted sheep hunting allocations, and a more flexible CWD testing protocol. Expresses concerns about the	Thank you for your support. As this comment letter was received by the Commission and Department prior to the Notice meeting in December, responses to these concerns were provided in the Department's presentation.

#	Name, Type, Date	Topic	Comment Summary	Response
			limited number of Tehachapi and Marble Mountain elk tags, the potential impact of late-season rut hunts on deer populations, and the lack of transparency regarding predation on antelope. The authors urge the Commission to consider these issues and to continue working collaboratively with the hunting community to ensure the health of wildlife populations	
7A	Joe Hobbs, Email, 12/13/2024	Elk	Indicates there should be a process to allocate elk hunting opportunities across the methods of take. Disagrees that archery elk tags are highest in demand among general hunting constituents.	Thank you for your comment. The Department determines tag quota recommendations across all seasons and in all hunt zones based on abundance and demographic data collected by the Department in consideration with increasing hunt opportunities and hunt quality for all constituents.
7B	Joe Hobbs, Email, 12/13/2024	Deer	The proposed late deer hunt in D7 should not be approved because it disproportionately targets older-age bucks during the rut, making them more vulnerable and negatively impacting already declining deer herds. Additionally, the higher success rates of late-season hunts would require a significant reduction in general season tags, ultimately decreasing hunter opportunity while increasing the harvest of mature bucks.	The estimated annual deer harvest in D7 over the past five years (2019–2023) has averaged 751 deer, with a standard deviation of 315. Given this level of natural variation, allocating 25 additional tags represents a minor adjustment relative to historical fluctuations. The Department is not recommending a general hunt tag reduction, as data indicates that such reductions do not significantly impact harvest. For example, in 2014, the D6 general hunt quota was reduced from 10,000 to 6,000 tags, yet the estimated harvest that year was 876—only slightly below the 2010–2018 average (928) and higher than the 2010 minimum (634), when the quota remained at 10,000.
8	J. Alway, Email, 2/8/2025	Fundraising tags	Expresses frustration that fundraising tags formerly available through a random drawing are now only available through auction, and inaccessible to most hunters.	Thank you for your comment. This subject falls outside of the scope of the proposed regulations for big game hunting.

#	Name, Type, Date	Topic	Comment Summary	Response
9	Chris Bowles, (CBH/SAA), oral comment at Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting, 2/12/2025	CWD	Bow hunters recognize the severity of CWD. Concern about confiscation of carcasses. Once in a lifetime elk tags, junior hunters, etc. will be interested in keeping carcasses. Mr. Bowles requests a discussion on how this will play out in the future. Expecting push back from the hunting community.	The Commission and Department recognize that this is a concern for hunters. Current language allows hunters to keep trophies if the high-risk materials (e.g. brain, spinal cord) are removed. This is no different than regulations for importation of deer and elk harvested out of state (CCR T14, section 712). Amending the current language in (f)(2)(C)(1) to include meat processors and taxidermists within a CMZ or contiguous CMZ could be an option for sampling that would allow retention of trophies and align with the goals of this regulation. Additionally, there may be other ways for hunters to retain trophies and comply with the regulations in that (f)(2)(C)(1) only requires that brain and spinal cord be relinquished to the department. However, in practice this is likely to be the head sans skull cap with antlers.
10	Bill Gaines, CDA, RMEF, WSF, (CBH/SAA), oral comment at Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting, 2/12/2025	CWD	Acknowledges the additional CWD detections. Willing to work with Dept to submit CWD samples.	Comment noted.
11	Greg Werner, SCI California Coalition, oral comment at Wildlife Resources Committee	CWD	Also disappointed about additional CWD detections. Mr. Werner Would like hunters to be able to retain heads. Wants to see an option for that. Tag holder could possibly pay for storage while testing occurs. Work with Dept. to insert paragraph for an option	See response to Comment #9.

#	Name, Type, Date	Topic	Comment Summary	Response
	Meeting, 2/12/2025			
12	J. R. Young, oral comment at Wildlife Resources Committee Meeting, 2/12/2025		Echo comments from previous speakers. Find a way to deal with confiscation. Get the word out in Big Game Digest.	See response to Comment #9.



BIG GAME HUNTING

Recommendations to the Fish and Game Commission

April 16, 2025

Mario Klip and Paige Prentice

Wildlife Branch, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Big Game Hunting Programs Overview

- Black-tailed Deer and Mule Deer Hunting
- Desert Bighorn Sheep Hunts
- Pronghorn Hunts
- Elk Hunts





BLACK-TAILED AND MULE DEER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR:

- *D-7 Late Season Buck Hunt (Pilot)*
- *Chronic Wasting Disease*

PRESENTED BY: MARIO KLIP

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

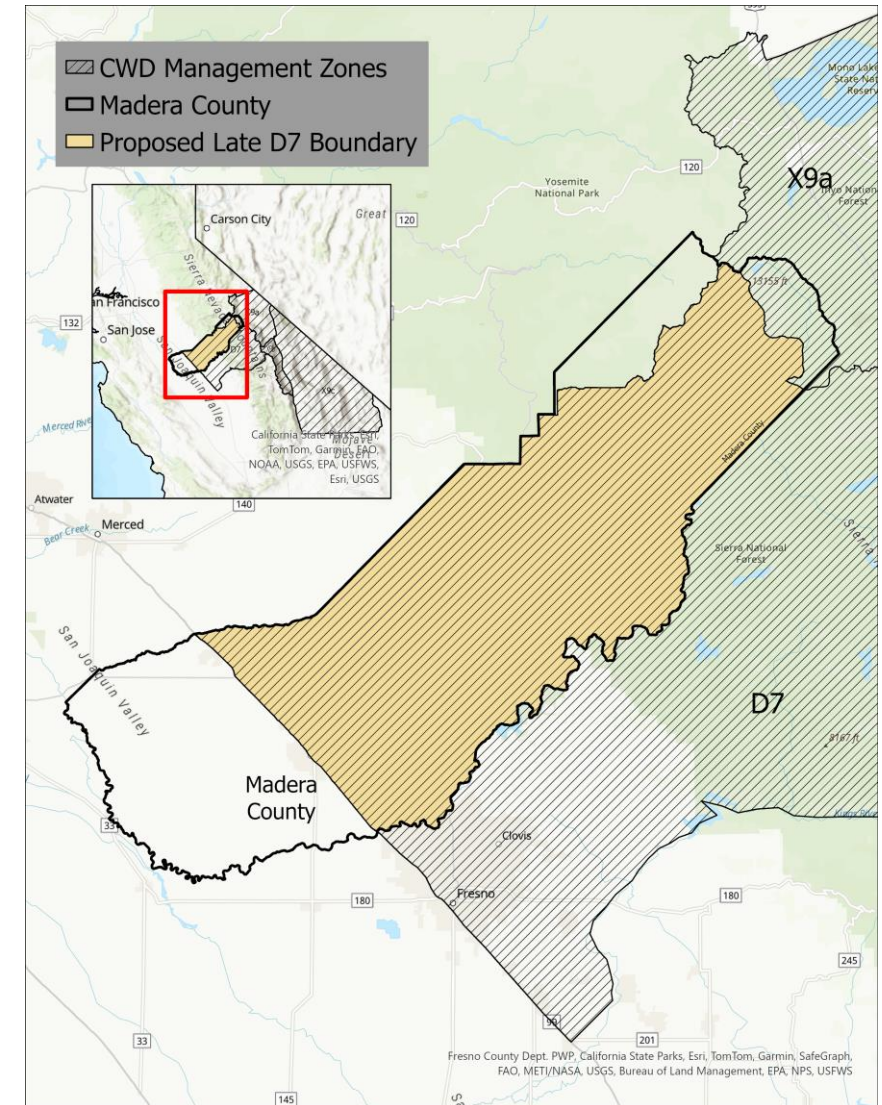
Deer D7 Late Season Buck Hunt (Pilot)

Summary of existing and proposed hunts in D-7

Season	2025 Hunt Dates	Tags	Hunt Area
Current Archery	Aug. 16 – Sep. 7	9,000	D7
Current General	Sep. 20 – Nov. 2		
D-7 Late Season Buck Hunt (G40)*	Nov. 22 – 30	<u>(0-50) 25</u>	That portion of Madera County within D7

- Between 2019 and 2023, the estimated average annual deer harvest in D7 was 751, with a standard deviation of 315.
- An increase of up to 25 tags reflects only a minor change in historical variability

* Denotes new hunt recommended for 25/26

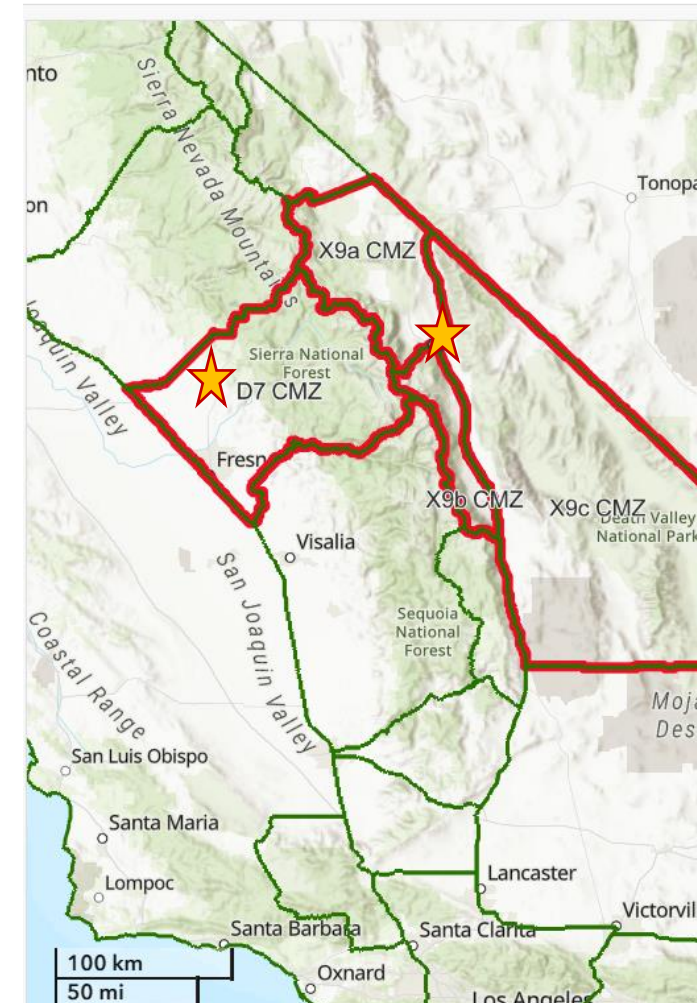


Chronic Wasting Disease

- Recommend adoption of a standard regulation
- Defines CWD Management Zone to be adaptive:
 - Any deer hunt zone where CWD-positive animal has been detected or is within 5 miles of a detection, excluding Zone A.
 - Within Zone A, any county where a CWD-positive animal has been detected or is within 5 miles of a detection.
- Testing and Handling requirements:
 - Criteria for designating testing and handling requirements.
 - Director designation each year by July 1.
 - Permissible sampling methods and minimum data needs.
 - Handling requirements and exceptions, if implemented.
- Dept. shall maintain a website with current CMZs (CWD Management Zone) and designations to notify hunters of requirements.

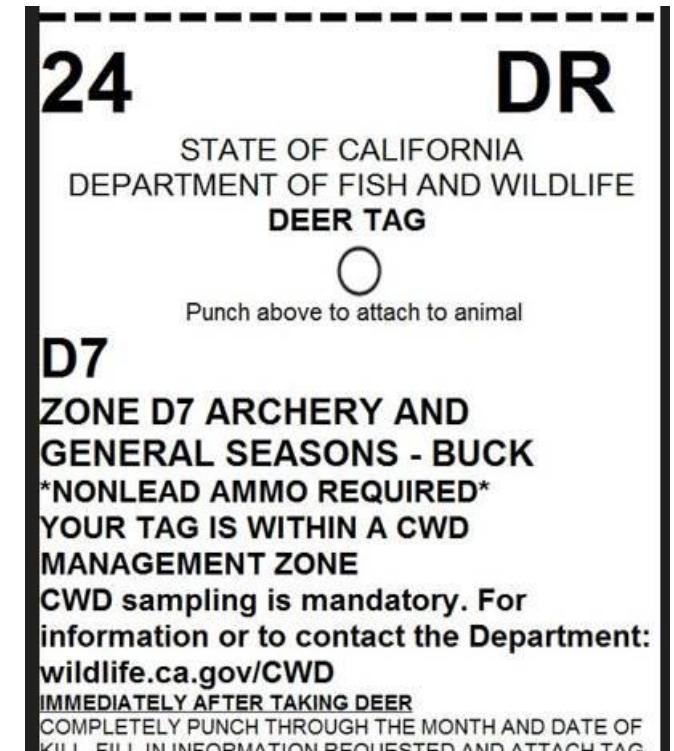
Wildlife.ca.gov/CWD

Where is CWD in California?



Chronic Wasting Disease

- Language added to all DEER and ELK hunt tags
 - "Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been detected in California. Know the CWD and regulatory status of your hunt zone. For information on how to get your harvest sampled or to contact the Department, see wildlife.ca.gov/CWD."
- CMZs
 - "Chronic Wasting Disease has been detected in this hunt zone. Special requirements exist for tag holders in this zone, please visit wildlife.ca.gov/CWD for details."
- CMZ adjacent deer hunt zones:
 - "Chronic Wasting Disease has been detected in nearby hunt zones. Special requirements may exist for tag holders for this zone, please visit wildlife.ca.gov/CWD for details."



DESERT BIGHORN SHEEP HUNT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

- *Fundraising tag designations*
- *Zone boundary modification*
- *Two hunt zone season modifications*
- *Tag quotas modifications*
- *General tag modifications
(Increase from 21 to 27)*
- *Fundraising tag modification
(Increase from 2 to 3)*

PRESENTED BY: PAIGE PRENTICE

California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: Fundraising Tags

Open Zone Tag

Section 362(b)(1):

- Clarify that the OZ tag can only hunt in zones that are issued a general tag
- Add Zone 10

Marble/Clipper/S. Bristol and Cady Fundraising Tags

Section 362(b)(2 & 3):

- Change to “Single Zone Tag” and adjust wording to allow CDFW to choose the zone each year, if needed.
 - Recommendations:
Single Zone Tag 1: Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, and Ord Mts
Single Zone Tag 2: Zone 2 – Old Dad and Kelso Peak

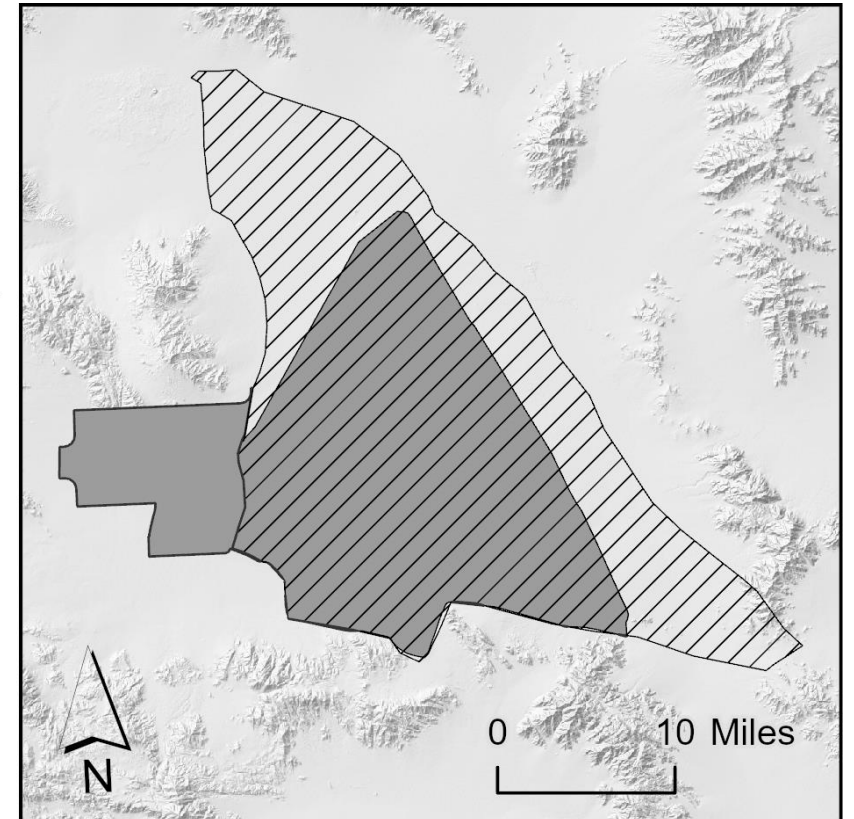
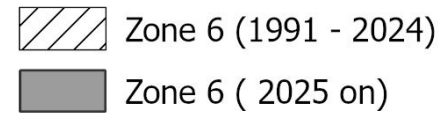


Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: Modify a Boundary

Sheep Hole (Zone 6): Boundary Adjustment *Section 362(6)(A)*

- Adjust the boundary (from lines to solid) to better reflect habitat use of rams in this area.
- Adjustment is based on GPS data and home range analyses.
- Zone adjustment will likely increase hunter opportunity.

2025 Modifications to Zone 6
(Sheep Hole Mountains)



Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: Split Season Zone 7

White Mountains (Zone 7):

- Maintain summer season and pilot a winter season
 - Period 1: August 16 – September 28, 2025
 - Period 2: January 3 – February 1, 2026
- Increase tag allocation between both periods
 - 2024/2025 Season: 4 tags, range 0-6
 - Period 1: recommending 3 tags
 - Period 2: recommending 2 tags



Photo: O. Brown

Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: Split Season Zone 10

Newberry/Rodman/Ord (Zone 10):

- Split the winter season into two periods
 - Period 1 December 6, 2025 – January 3, 2026
 - Period 2 January 4 – February 1, 2026
- Increase the tag allocation
 - 2024/2025 Season: 6 tags, range 0-6
 - Period 1: recommending 4 tags
 - Period 2: recommending 4 tags



Photo: E. Lindo

Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: General Tag Quota Recommendations based on Population Data

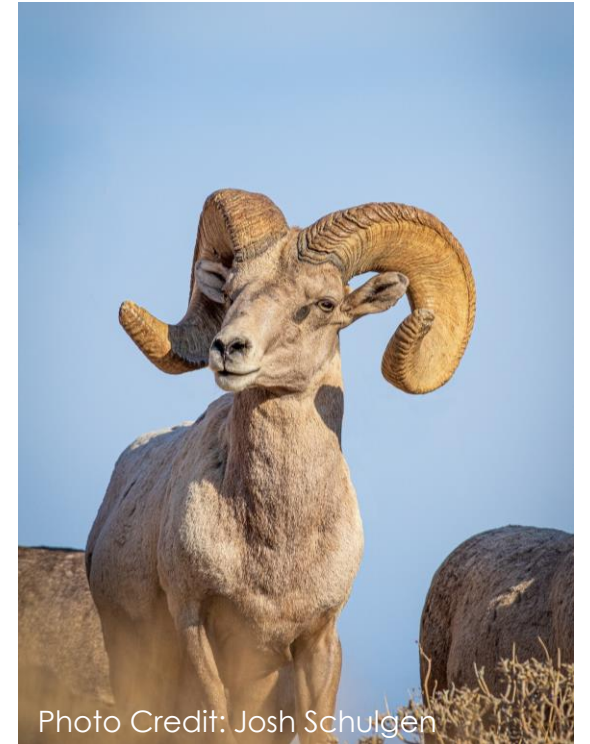
Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones	24/25 Tag Allocation	Former Tag Quota Ranges	25/26 Tag Allocation	Proposed Tag Quota Range	Season Dates
Zone 1 – Marble/Clipper Mountains	1	0-5	1	0-5	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 2 – Kelso Peak/Old Dad Mountains*	2	0-2	3*	0-4*	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 3 – Clark/Kingston Mountain Ranges*	3	0-4	4*	0-4	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 4 – Orocopia Mountains	1	0-2	1	0-2	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 5 – San Geronio Wilderness*	0	0-3	1*	0-3	12/20/25 – 02/15/26
Zone 6 – Sheep Hole Mountains	1	0-2	1	0-2	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 7 – White Mountains (Period 1) *	4	0-6	3*	0-4*	08/16/25 - 09/28/25
Zone 7 – White Mountains Period 2*	-	-	2*	0-4*	01/03/26 – 02/01/26
Zone 8 – South Bristol Mountains	1	0-3	1	0-3	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 9 – Cady Mountains	2	0-4	2	0-4	12/06/25 - 02/01/26
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Mountains*	6	0-6	0*	-*	--
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Period 1*	-	-	4*	0-7*	12/06/25 - 01/03/26
Zone 10 – Newberry, Rodman, Ord Period 2*	-	-	4*	0-7*	01/04/26 – 02/01/26
Total:	21	0-37	27*	0-49*	

* Denotes recommended changes for 25/26



Section 362 Bighorn Sheep: Fundraising Tag Allocations Based on Population Data

Nelson Bighorn Sheep Hunt Zones	24/25 Tag Allocation	Former Tag Quota Ranges	Proposed 25/26 Tag Allocation
Open Zone Fundraising Tag	1	0-1	1
Marble/Clipper/S. Bristol Fundraising Tag*	0	0-1	-*
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 1* (Zone 10)	-	-	1*
Cady Mountains Fundraising Tag**	1	0-1	-*
Single Zone Fundraising Tag 2* (Zone 2)	-	-	1*
Total:	2	0-3	3



* Denotes recommended changes for 25/26



PRONGHORN HUNT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

- *Hunt Quota Reductions*

PRESENTED BY: MARIO KLIP

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Section 363 Pronghorn Antelope Hunting



- Reminder: 68 Tag reduction for the 24-25 hunt season
- Administrative procedures require initiation of regulations prior to timing of winter helicopter surveys
- Helicopter surveys (Feb. 2025) indicate a continued decline
- Habitat management is critical to sustaining and recovering pronghorn herds therefore:
 - PLM tags not considered for reduction due to the critical habitat improvements they provide
 - Currently, 1 PLM tag in both Likely Tables and Clear Lake
- Department recommends reducing tags in Clear Lake and Likely Tables Hunt Zones by 21 tags

Pronghorn Antelope Hunt Tag Recommendation

Hunt Zone	Description	2024 Allocation	2025 Recommendation	Net change
Zone 1 - Mount Dome	General - Buck	2	2	0
Zone 2 - Clear Lake*	General - Buck	12	6	-6
Zone 2 - Clear Lake	Archery - Buck	1	1	0
Zone 3 - Likely Tables	General - Buck - Period 1	5	5	0
Zone 3 - Likely Tables*	General - Buck - Period 2	5	0	-5
Zone 3 - Likely Tables*	Archery - Buck	5	0	-5
Zone 3 - Likely Tables*	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	0	-5
Zone 4 - Lassen	General - Buck - Period 1	35	35	0
Zone 4 - Lassen	General - Buck - Period 2	35	35	0
Zone 4 - Lassen	Archery - Buck	5	5	0
Zone 4 - Lassen	Apprentice - Either-sex	5	5	0
Zone 5 - Big Valley	General - Buck	5	5	0
Zone 5 - Big Valley	Archery - Buck	1	1	0
Zone 5 - Big Valley	Apprentice - Either-sex	1	1	0
Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	General - Buck	10	10	0
Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	Archery - Buck	1	1	0
Zone 6 - Surprise Valley	Apprentice - Either-sex	4	4	0
Total		137	116	-21

* Denotes recommended changes for the 25/26 hunt year



ELK HUNT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

- *General Hunt Opportunities*
- *Archery Only Hunt Opportunities*
- *SHARE Hunt Opportunities*
- *SHARE Hunt Season Extension in Conflict Zones (Northwestern and Mendocino)*

PRESENTED BY: MARIO KLIP

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

General Methods Elk Hunts (Rocky Mtn., Tule Elk)

Elk Hunt Zone	2024 Tag Quotas		2025 (Range) Tag Quotas		Additional Tag Issuance Type
	Bull	Antlerless	Bull	Antlerless	
Tehachapi	5	10	(5-10) 10*	10	PLM: 0, SHARE:0
Gabilan	4	6	(4-10) 10*	6	PLM: 0, SHARE: 0
Lake Pillsbury (Period 1)	0	4	(0) 0*	(0-4) 4*	PLM: 0, SHARE: 0
Lake Pillsbury (Period 2)	2	0	(0) 0*	(0-4) 2*	
Lake Pillsbury (Period 3)* NEW	-	-	(0) 0*	(0-4) 2*	
Lake Pillsbury (Period 4)* NEW	-	-	(0-2) 2*	(0) 0*	
Lake Pillsbury (Period 5)* NEW	-	-	(0-2) 2*	(0) 0*	

- Tehachapi – non-native elk population; concern for genetic mixing with neighboring native tule elk
- Gabilan – increasing population, well above management goal
- Lake Pillsbury – stable population, within management goal

Net Change: 17 General tags added (13 bull, 4 antlerless)

*Denotes recommendation/change for the 25/26 hunt year.



ALL NEW Archery Only Elk Hunts

Elk Hunt Zone	2025 Tag (Range) Quota		2025 Tag Issuance Type
	Bull	Antlerless	
Central Coast	(0-5) 5*	(0-5) 5*	General: 10 bull, 10 antlerless PLM: 30 bull, 25 antlerless SHARE: 0, 0
La Panza	(0-5) 5*	(0-5) 5*	General: 12 bull, 12 antlerless PLM: 27 bull, 21 antlerless SHARE: 0, 0
Siskiyou	(0-10) 10*	(0) 0*	General: 20 bull, 30 antlerless PLM: 4 bull, 2 antlerless SHARE: 2 bull, 2 antlerless

- Central Coast⁺ – well above management goal
- La Panza⁺ – within management goal, bull ratio above goal
- Siskiyou – minimum count below management goal, but biased low

Net Change: 30 tags added (20 bull, 10 antlerless)

*Denotes recommendation/change for the 25/26 hunt year.

⁺ Discrepancy in recommended tag allocations from previous presentations



SHARE Tule Elk Hunts

Elk Hunt Zone	2024 SHARE Tag Quotas		2025 SHARE (Range) Tag Quota		Additional Tag Issuance Type
	Bull	Antlerless	Bull	Antlerless	
Bear Valley	2	1	2	(1-6) 6*	General: 2 bull, 1 antlerless PLM: 0

- Increasing population, minimum count is close to upper end of management goal.

Net Change: 5 antlerless tags added

*Denotes recommendation/change for the 25/26 hunt year.



Northwestern and Mendocino Conflict Zones

A collective hunting approach

Maximize the use of each available tool to reduce the local population.

General (45 tags)	+	SHARE (Up to 150 tags)	+	Landowner (Up to 126 tags)	=	Total (Up to 321 tags)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 27 Bull• 15 Antlerless• 3 Either-Sex		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 60 Bull• 90 Antlerless		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 21 Bull• 105 Antlerless		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 108 Bull• 210 Antlerless• 3 Either-Sex

Public Tags

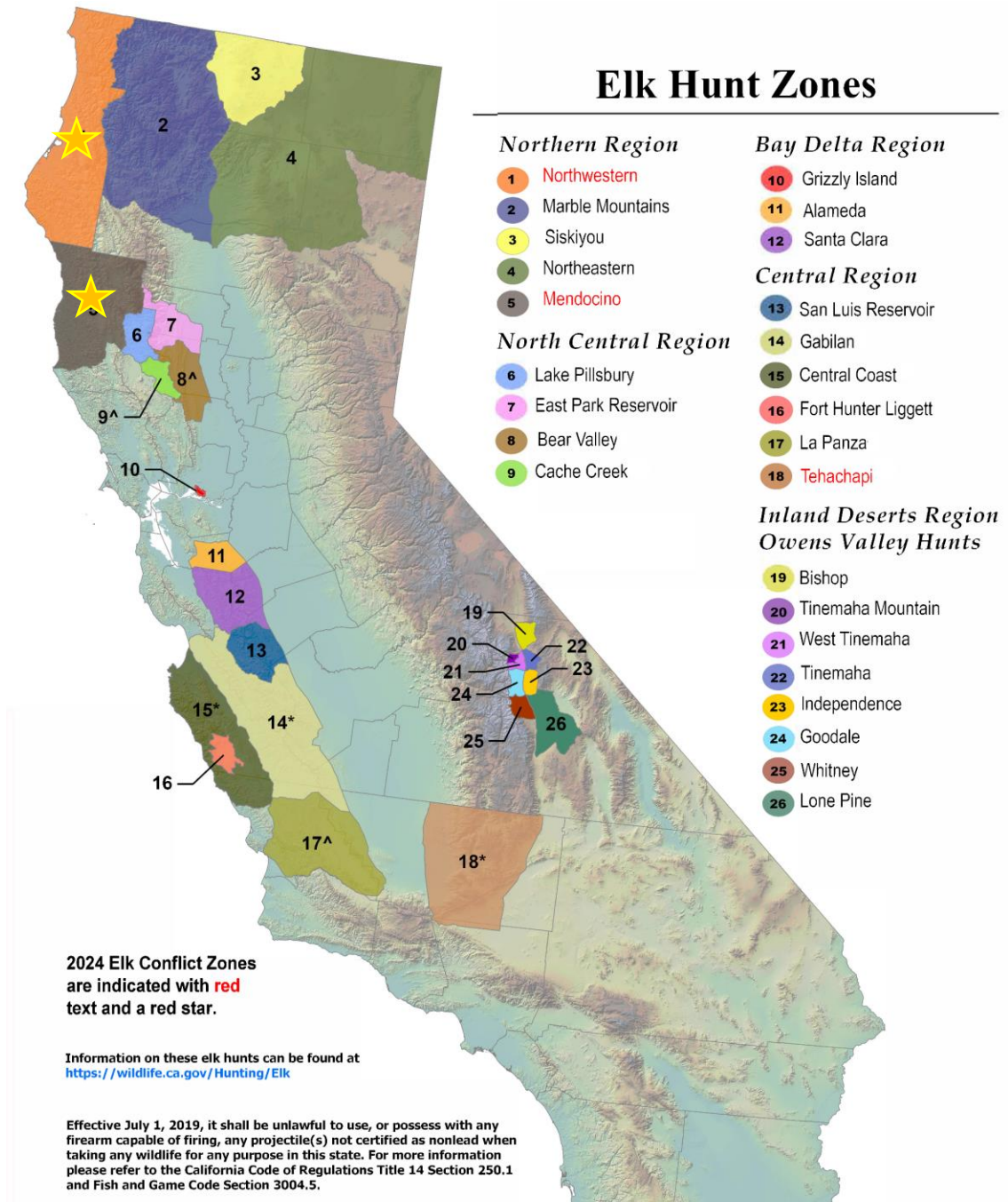
- **General tags** – issued through the general lottery.
- **SHARE tags** – private landowners may contract with the Department for scheduled hunts.
 - **Timing** – limited timeframe to address damage in the conflict zones especially in the Spring.



SHARE Elk Hunt Season: Northwestern and Mendocino Conflict Zones

RECOMMENDED REGULATION CHANGE FOR 2025

- Adopt a year-round hunt season for SHARE tags
- Current: August 15th – January 31st
- Recommended: July 1st – June 30th
- Will allow for private landowner damage to be addressed year-round through public hunting opportunities



Questions?

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