

Meeting Date: January 21, 2016

Agenda Item No. 1

Agenda Item: Upland Game, Turkey and Furbearer
Season Setting Biennial 2016-2017
(Action)

Bureau Chief Approval:



Prepared by: Jeffrey M. Knetter & Steve Nadeau for Jon Rachael, State Wildlife Manager

Background:

Upland game bird, upland game animal, furbearer, and migratory bird (crow) season dates, bag, and possession limits are set on even-numbered years and cover a two-year period. The purpose of this agenda item is to adopt changes to the Rules governing the taking of Game Birds (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 09), the taking of Game Animals (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 07), the taking of Furbearing Animals (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 16), the taking of Migratory Birds (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 13), and Falconry (IDAPA 13, Title 01, Chapter 14).

Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-104 grants authority to the Commission to promulgate biological and nonbiological rules. Idaho Code 67-52 (Idaho Administrative Procedure Act) governs the process for considering, adopting, and implementing nonbiological rules.

Public Involvement Process:

A statewide press release was issued on proposed changes to seasons. Region staff provided the public with opportunities to comment on Department-proposed changes, and the Department website had a questionnaire asking for public input on the proposed changes to upland game rules, turkey, and furbearer rules. Public comments were considered and used to shape modification of some of the proposals.

Justification:

Seasons are designed to manage Idaho's upland game, turkey, and furbearer resources for maximum hunting and trapping opportunity while considering biological and sociological implications.

Staff Recommendation:

Final recommendations are attached and will be presented at the Commission meeting.

Suggested Motion: Commission adopt staff recommendations for 2016 and 2017 Upland Game, Turkey, and Furbearer seasons.



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2016-2017 Upland Game, Turkey and Furbearer Proposals

Upland Game and Turkey Proposals

Panhandle

Fall Turkey: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Extend the fall general season to December 31 in Units 1, 2 (except Farragut State Park and Farragut WMA), 3, 4, 4A, 5 and 6; this is a 16-day increase in the fall season.

September 15, 2016 through December ~~15~~ 31, 2016

September 15, 2017 through December ~~15~~ 31, 2016

Justification: Turkeys are plentiful and widespread in the Panhandle. They are creating conflicts in many agricultural areas, especially during the winter. Hunter harvest is not a limiting factor, and extending the season may alleviate some turkey depredations.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping.

Clearwater

No upland game or turkey proposals.

Southwest

Controlled Fall Turkey Hunts in Units 22, 31, 32, & 32A: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Restructure Fall Controlled Hunt No. 9018 (all of Units 22, 32, 32A; 75 permits) and Hunt No. 9019 (all of Unit 31; 75 permits). Combine Units 22 and 31, and maintain hunt in Units 32 (except that portion in Payette County) and 32A.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Fall Hunts	Permits
9018	22-1: All of Units 22 and <u>31 32, 32A</u>	September 15 – October 9	125 <u>75</u>
9019	31-1: All of Unit 31	September 15 – October 9	20
9019	<u>32-1: All of Units 32 (except that portion in Payette County) and 32A</u>	September 15 – October 9	<u>75</u>

Proposal: Add a new youth-only fall controlled turkey hunt in Units 22 and 31 with 20 permits.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Fall Hunts	Permits
<u>New Hunt</u>	<u>22-2: All of Units 22 and 31</u>	<u>Youth Hunt</u> <u>September 1 - October 9</u>	<u>20</u>



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Justification: Turkey populations appear to be growing on private lands along the Highway 71 corridor. The Department intends to manage the turkey populations in Units 22, 31, 32, and 32A similarly. All four units have similar habitat characteristics, which include low-elevation, private land extending into higher elevation public land. Realigning hunts and changing the permit distribution between the hunts will better distribute hunters. Adding a new fall youth-only hunt along with realigning boundaries of current hunts will provide additional hunting opportunity and may help address growing turkey populations on private land. The proposed total increase in permits is 25.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. A total of 22 people provided comments on turkey proposals in this area. The proposal to restructure fall hunting opportunities in Units 22, 31, 32, and 32A was supported by 50% of respondents; 23% did not support this proposal, 19% did not support or oppose this proposal, and 9% commented that tags should be increased further than proposed. The proposal to create a new youth-only controlled hunt in Units 22 and 31 was supported by 64%; 9% did not support the proposal, and 27% did not support or oppose this proposal.

Controlled Fall Turkey Hunt in Unit 38: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Create a new fall controlled turkey hunt in all of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County (Hunt Area 38-2) with 40 permits.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Fall Hunts	Permits
<u>New Hunt</u>	<u>38-2: All of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County.</u>	<u>September 15 — October 9</u>	<u>40</u>

Justification: In Unit 38, some landowners have expressed concerns that turkeys are becoming too abundant on their private agricultural lands. The Department has responded to turkey impacts on agricultural lands during the last two years, including holding a depredation hunt. This proposed change may help address a growing turkey population on private lands in Unit 38 by allowing the harvest of hens during the fall.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. A total of 19 people provided comments on turkey proposals in this area; 53% of respondents supported this proposal, 37% opposed this proposal, and 10% did not support or oppose this proposal.

Controlled Spring Turkey Hunts in Unit 38: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Split current spring controlled turkey Hunt No. 9003 (all of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County) into two separate hunts.



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Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Spring Hunts	Permits
9003	<u>38-1: All of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County.</u>	April 15 – May 25	75
<u>New Hunt</u>	<u>38-2: All of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County.</u>	April 15 – April 30	60
<u>New Hunt</u>	<u>38-2: All of Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County.</u>	May 1 – May 25	35

Justification: Turkey hunters in Unit 38 and that portion of Unit 32 in Payette County have been very successful (73% success rate) over the last several years. This success rate nearly triples the Southwest Region’s minimum goal of 25% success rate for this hunt area. The spring controlled turkey hunts in this area are very popular, but access remains limited. Splitting the season would distribute hunting opportunity into an early and late spring hunt, with fewer hunters during the first 15 days of the season. The proposed increase in permits is 20. The split season would be similar to the current split youth-only turkey hunt seasons.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. A total of 18 people provided comments on turkey proposals in this area; 89% of respondents supported this proposal and 11% did not support or oppose this proposal.

Magic Valley

Controlled Spring Turkey Hunts in Unit 54: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Increase permits in each of the spring controlled hunts in Unit 54.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Spring Hunts	Permits
9009	54-1: All of Unit 54	Youth Hunt April 8 – May 25	20 <u>30</u>
9010	54-2: All of Unit 54	April 15 – May 5	16 <u>30</u>
9011	54-3: All of Unit 54	May 6 – May 25	16 <u>30</u>

Justification: In 2014, the Department reduced the number of permits in each of the spring controlled turkey hunts in Unit 54 in response to habitat loss from the 2012 Minidoka Complex Fire. Turkey numbers and harvest success have increased in recent years. Furthermore, depredation issues have arisen near Oakley. The proposed increase in available permits is 38.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. A total of 13 people supported the turkey proposals in this area. Only three Magic Valley residents commented on this proposal.



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Southeast

Spring Turkey Hunts in Units 70 & 71: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Eliminate spring controlled hunts in Unit 71 and replace with a general spring hunt and include Unit 70 as part of the general hunt.

General season spring hunt in Units 70 and 71.
April 15 – May 25; youth only hunt April 8-14.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Spring Hunts	Permits
9015	71-1: All of Units 71	Youth Hunt April 8 – May 25	75
9016	71-2: All of Unit 71	April 15 – April 30	75
9017	71-3: All of Unit 71	May 1 – May 25	75

Justification: Turkey populations have expanded into Unit 70 and have increased in Unit 71 in recent years. As a result, nuisance complaint issues have arisen. The Department proposes to reduce future nuisance conflicts in Unit 70 and 71 by providing hunting opportunities through a spring general hunt.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. This proposal was modified from what was originally proposed in response to public concern about general fall hunts in Units 71, 73, 74, 75, 77, and 78.

Fall Turkey Hunts in Units 71, 73, 74, 75, 77, & 78: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Eliminate existing fall controlled turkey hunts in Units 73, 74, 75, 77 and 78, and replace with a general season. Increase the number of tags available in the controlled hunt in Unit 71.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Fall Hunts	Permits
9021	71-4: All of Unit 71	September 15 – November 30	100 200
9022	71-5: All of Unit 71	Youth Hunt September 15 – December 31	100
9023	73-1: All of Units 73, 74, 75, 77, and 78	September 15 – October 31	150

General Season Fall Hunt in Units 73, 74, 75, 77, and 78.
September 15, 2016 through October 31, 2016
September 15, 2017 through October 31, 2017



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Justification: In recent years, turkey populations in the Southeast Region have increased, and their distribution has expanded (including into urban areas where hunting access can be restricted). As a result, depredation/nuisance complaint issues have arisen. During winter 2014-2015, over 200 turkey depredation permits were issued. Opportunities are available to address some of the concerns in these units by providing additional fall hunting opportunity. Fall general hunting opportunities were available in Units 73, 74, 75, 77, and 78 from 2005-2011.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. This proposal was modified from what was originally proposed in response to public concern about general fall hunts in Units 71, 73, 74, 75, 77, and 78.

Upper Snake

WMA Upland Game Bird Permit: (changes in red and underlined)

Proposal: Add Cartier Slough, Market Lake, and Mud Lake WMAs to the list of WMAs where shooting hours start at 10 a.m.

AREA 2

Hunting hours start at 10 a.m. on Cartier Slough, Market Lake, Mud Lake, and Sterling WMAs.

Justification: This proposal would make shooting hours on WMAs where pheasants are stocked consistent across the state. Additionally, the later start time will reduce conflicts between stocking efforts and hunting, and should be safer for staff releasing pheasants.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping. A total of one comment was received in support of this proposal.

Salmon

Proposal: Add GMU 36A to Turkey Controlled Hunt 9001 and 9002 hunt areas, and add 5 permits to youth controlled hunt 9002.

Hunt No	Controlled Hunt Area Descriptions	Spring Hunts	Permits
9001	36B-1: All of Units <u>36A</u> , 36B and 37, and that portion of Unit 28 upstream from and including Hat Creek Drng	April 15-May 25 Limited Access	15 20
9002	36B-1: All of Units <u>36A</u> , 36B and 37, and that portion of Unit 28 upstream from and including Hat Creek Drng	Youth Hunt April 8 – May 25 Limited Access	5 10



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Justification: In recent years, the turkey population in the Salmon Region has expanded their distribution in the Salmon River portion of GMU 36A. Hunters currently have no legal hunting access to the birds in controlled hunts 9001 and 9002. Expanding the hunt areas in both of these controlled hunts to include GMU 36A, and increasing the number of tags provides additional turkey hunting opportunity.

Public Opinion: Comments were accepted in person, by phone and e-mail, and via internet scoping.



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Furbearer Proposals

Panhandle

No furbearer proposals

Clearwater

No furbearer proposals

Southwest

No furbearer proposals

Magic Valley

Proposal: Remove Lime Creek from closures.

Exceptions: Beaver

- Elmore County: All public lands within the following drainages: Bear Cr. (trib to Feather R.), Case Cr., Fall Cr. Upstream from and including Meadow Cr., Clover Cr., King Ranch reservoir, Wilson Cr., Little Wilson Cr. and Elk Cr. on Wilson Flat north of Anderson Ranch Dam, ~~Lime Cr.~~, Hunter Cr., Smith Cr. upstream from Washboard Cr., Syrup Cr., Trinity Cr., Willow Cr. in the Danskin Mts., (trib to S. Fk. Boise R.), AND all lands within the Boise River WMA: CLOSED.

Beaver Closures: Beaver surveys show they are abundant in Lime Creek area. Also, there is very limited access and much of this area is located on private property that is not readily accessible to trappers. Many roads in the tributaries of Lime Creek are now impassable because of flooding from beaver dams, and due to difficult access removing this closure will not negatively impact beaver populations. The closure has served its purpose of recovering the watershed and restoring beaver, and difficult access will likely result in low and sustainable harvest of beavers. Hunter Creek is a tributary to Lime creek and will remain closed due to continued interest in beaver recovery.

Public Input

A public open house was held and no comments on the proposal were received. However, From the 46 online respondents, 7 people supported this proposal and 7 people did not support this specific proposal. Furthermore, 13 additional people did not support this proposal or trapping in general, but their focus for commenting was directed at proposals in other parts of the state. Only 3 Magic Valley residents submitted online comments.



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Southeast

Proposals:

Controlled Beaver Trapping Units: Unit 201, Reduce tags from 10 to 5
Surveys indicate a loss of 2-3 beaver activity centers in the Mink Creek drainage since the 2013 survey. Trapper harvest has been below the quota each year.

Controlled Beaver Trapping Units		
Unit	Season Dates	No. of Beaver
201	October 22 - April 15	10 5

Exceptions: Beaver

- Franklin County: Logan River drainage, including Beaver Creek and Whites Creek drainages **CLOSED- OPEN**. Birch Creek Drainage above the Forest Service boundary - **CLOSED**.

Beaver Closures: Beaver activity in Logan River drainage will support some trapping effort and this effort may help with Forest Service concerns associated with road infrastructure. A stream restoration project and beaver translocation project is being implemented in the Birch Creek Drainage. A closure will enhance the success of this project.

Public Input

Unlike most regions, the Southeast Region has a very active stakeholder group called the “Watershed Guardians” that support restrictive beaver and watershed management. A public open house was held at the Pocatello Regional office on 12/21/2015. Thirteen people attended the open house. They met with 3 beaver advocates prior to the open house.

We received comments from 38 people on our furbearer proposals, most from our online comment form. We received comments from 10 people who were voicing their opposition to trapping in general.

Mink Creek – Reduction of beaver trapping quota from 10 to 5

We received 5 comments in support of this proposal and one comment that recommended no change from the current quota. We received 19 comments including Watershed Guardians specifically opposing trapping in the Mink Creek Drainage.

Franklin County – Birch Creek beaver trapping closure; open Logan River, Beaver Creek, White Creek drainage to beaver trapping

We received 6 comments that supported this proposal. We received 10 comments that opposed opening Beaver Creek and White Canyon Creek to beaver trapping. We received a comment from the Watershed Guardians requesting a quota on the Logan River, Beaver Creek, White Creek drainages if we opened this area to beaver trapping.



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Bingham County – open beaver trapping on private lands in the Willow Creek Drainage

We received 4 comments that supported this proposal. We received 11 comments that did not support this change, most requesting a quota be specified for the drainage.

General comments on beaver management in SE Region

In many cases the following comments were made by multiple commenters, 7 commenters used the same comments provided by the Watershed Guardians comments specific to the proposals:

- Close Toponce, Pebble, and Dempsey creeks to beaver trapping.
- Have separate quotas for Toponce and Pebble creeks.

General comments received:

- Depredation/kill permits should count against the trapping quota in control trapping area.
- Create a beaver management plan for the region.
- Use non-lethal methods for addressing nuisance beaver issues.
- Relocate nuisance beaver.
- Establish minimum population densities by drainage.
- Require trappers to report their take by drainage, rather than by county.
- Want IDFG to recognize the value of beaver to watershed health.

Upper Snake

Proposal: Change the beaver trapping restrictions in the beaver trapping closure areas that we have had in place for the Willow Creek Drainage (Bonneville and Bingham counties) and the Three Mile and West Camas Creek drainages (Clark County). The change would open up trapping on private lands within the current closures, but maintain beaver trapping closures on public lands (i.e., Fish and Game, IDL, Forest Service, and BLM properties).

Exceptions: Beaver

- **Bonneville County:** All public lands within the Willow Creek drainage, including the Tex Creek WMA, IDL, USFS, and BLM properties; **CLOSED.** ~~All streams on the Tex Creek WMA: Willow Creek and all of its tributaries: Closed.~~
- **Clark County:** All public lands within the following drainages: Edie Cr., Irving Cr., Miners Cr., Three Mile Cr., West Camas Cr., Indian Cr., and Middle Cr., upstream from the Targhee National Forest boundary: **CLOSED.**

Beaver Closures: Nuisance beaver complaints continue to rise in these areas, particularly on private lands. In addition, beaver densities appear to have improved significantly in these areas over time and the Department had told trappers that if densities improved we would seek to return beaver trapping opportunity.



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These changes would allow trappers to be part of the solution in dealing with a growing beaver nuisance issue on private lands, return trapping opportunity to sportsmen, and give private landowners a tool to use in addressing their beaver problems. In addition, these changes would be incorporated into some beaver density, distribution, and response to trapping monitoring that the Upper Snake Beaver Coop plans implement over the next number of years.

Public Input

There were a number of comments that discussed the Willow Creek watershed and our proposals there. These were anti-trapping in general. The other comment came from our open house and was not related to the proposals.

Salmon

No furbearer proposals