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C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor
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An Open Letter from Director Virgil Moore to Idaho Hunters about Controlled Hunt Applications Decision

After full review of all information and facts relative to requests for reconsideration of my June 25, 2014 decision to allow applications for youth hunters of age 9 through 11 for deer, elk and antelope to be drawn contrary to guidance given by the Department, I have decided to let the original decision stand. The administrative hold on these tags is lifted and postal notification of all successful applicants will commence.

My decision is based on several factors. First and foremost is that there are 316 young hunters who drew tags and will have their first opportunity for a hunt taken from them if we reverse the decision. While I may have been shortsighted in the original decision, I stand by these kids, their parents and their excitement, in allowing them to proceed with their first hunting opportunity for big game using these permits. I simply cannot bring myself to disappoint them given the confusion about this issue. I sincerely believe that parents and kids thought they were acting legitimately. I ask parents who did not submit applications to place themselves in the shoes of the parents whose kids drew these permits, through no fault of theirs. Two wrongs do not make a right.

Second, the Department guidance for the application process was not clear and consistent in its placement or wording in the 2014 Big Game season and rule brochure. For example on page 11 of the brochure under *What's New - Hunting Age*, there is reference that an age 10 hunter may hunt big game in 2014 as long as they are accompanied by an adult, but there no mention of the guidance on control hunts that occurs later on page 108. The deer CH section mentions the youth guidance for age 10 hunters relative to not being eligible to apply for the youth CH, but the elk and antelope control hunt section do not have this same information. No mention in the brochure is made for 11 year old who are not 12 at the time of the hunt being ineligible. This was done in a later news release.

Third, there is no Commission rule or Idaho law that established the Department guidance. It was and is an administrative decision. This is a one-time occurrence that will never happen again. As of today any youth with a hunting license who will be age 10 at the time of the hunt can apply for a control hunt. There was no legislative intent language in House Bill 399 to delay the control hunt opportunity for 2014 big game seasons. That was our interpretation as an agency that we did not adequately and clearly communicate to all. Thus no violation of rule was conducted by those who were not aware of the administrative guidance and submitted an application and drew a permit. Many very knowledgeable hunters I talked to who were supportive of this legislation submitted control hunt applications for these youth tags based on their understanding of the new law.

Finally, for those who asked us to address their concern that the 1000 youth applicants may have affected their odds of drawing a tag in the various hunts, we will add an additional 283 tags back into each of these deer, elk and antelope hunts that were not unlimited CH tags. A draw for those from the age 11 (who will be 12 at the time of their hunt) and older hunters in the existing applicant pool will take place for these additional tags to address their understandable concern.

I recognize my decision does not address the many children and parents who paid attention to the Department's guidance and did not apply. I cannot make right the potential lost opportunity. I owe an apology to about 1,500 age 9, 10 and 11 youth (and their parents) for a decision that runs counter to their abiding by our guidance. I deeply regret that I have disappointed you. I will be sending a letter to each with a gift certificate of sufficient value for the control hunt application fees for the second control hunt or other tags and licenses. You are justified in being upset with me in this decision and I accept that criticism.

I hope that we as Idaho hunters can get beyond this decision and back to enjoying the many remaining opportunities for second control hunt draw for leftover tags along with the numerous Idaho general hunts for deer and elk, including some with specific youth opportunities. Further, I hope that parents and grandparents remember their opportunity to designate a control hunt tag to their eligible child or grandchild. Thank You for your understanding.

Virgil Moore, Director, Idaho Department of Fish and Game