

Meeting Date: February 4, 2016

Agenda Item No. 1

Agenda Item: Big Game Auction tags (Action)

Bureau Chief Approval: 

Prepared by: Jon Rachael

Background:

At its January 28, 2016 meeting, the Commission discussed public opinion survey results where hunters reported 55% acceptance of the concept of auction tags and options related to offering auction tags. The Commission discussed limited implementation of auction tags because the survey also indicated lower approval for full implementation of all 12 tags. The Commission asked staff to develop a proposal for release of one tag per species, excluding bighorn sheep (*i.e.* deer, elk, pronghorn, moose, and mountain goat).

Idaho Code 36-408(9) allows the Commission to issue up to 3 deer tags, 3 elk tags, 3 pronghorn tags, 1 moose tag, 1 mountain goat tag, and 1 bighorn sheep tag for auction as Governor Wildlife Partnership Tags. The Commission designates the species, date, and area for a tag. These may be auctioned by an incorporated nonprofit organization dedicated to conservation. At least 95% of proceeds go to the Department, of which up to 30% may be allocated to sportsman access programs such as *Access Yes!*, and the balance to wildlife habitat projects, wildlife management projects to increase the quantity and quality of big game herds, and other research and management activities approved by the Commission. Proceeds may not be used to acquire private property or federally-managed grazing permits, nor may proceeds be used to transplant bighorn sheep in southwest Idaho, or for litigation or Environmental Impact Statements involving bighorn sheep. The Commission has approved the Administrative Rules to guide how these tags may be issued and used, but these tags have not been released for auction to this point. Tags come from the nonresident controlled hunt quota for the designated species.

Idaho Code 36-408(9) provides that the director selects the incorporated nonprofit organization(s) dedicated to wildlife conservation that will auction the tag(s).

Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

Idaho Code 36-408(9) authorizes the Commission to release up to 12 Governor's Wildlife Partnership Tags for auction (up to 3 deer, 3 elk, 3 pronghorn, 1 moose, 1 mountain goat, and 1 bighorn sheep).

Public Involvement Process:

In the sportsmen's survey conducted in fall 2015, the Department asked sportsmen about their general opinions on auction tags for big game. Results from the random sample of 4,400 hunters (1,645 responses), 55% of hunters agreed it was acceptable to auction tags to generate money for wildlife management programs; 37% disagreed. Asked if the Commission should auction up to 12 additional big game tags to fund wildlife management and hunter access programs, 51% favored and 38% opposed.

Justification:

Commission action is required to issue Governor's Wildlife Partnership Tags.

Staff Recommendation:

The Commission asked staff to develop a proposal for issuance of the following Governor's Wildlife Partnership Tags for the 2017 season to be auctioned by qualified nonprofit conservation organizations: 1 deer, 1 elk, 1 pronghorn, 1 moose, and 1

mountain goat. Staff has no recommendation on the policy decision of auction tag issuance. Staff recommends that if issued, the Commission designation of hunt dates and areas be analogous to Super Hunt Tags (any open hunt for the species).

Action Requested:

Staff has not requested action. The following is a motion based on the Commission's policy discussion of January 28, 2016.

Draft Motion: *That the Commission authorize issuance of 1 deer, 1 elk, 1 pronghorn, 1 moose, and 1 mountain goat Governor's Wildlife Partnership Tag for any open hunt for the designated species in the 2017 season to be auctioned by qualified nonprofit conservation organizations.*