

## COMMITTEE STAFF SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 13, 2022 WRC

**7. REGULATION CHANGE PETITION 2021-017****Today's Item****Information** ☒**Action** ☐

Vet and discuss various changes to big game hunting regulations proposed under petition 2021-017.

**Summary of Previous/Future Actions**

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| • FGC received petition 2021-017 | Oct 14, 2021; Webinar/Teleconference             |
| • FGC referred petition to WRC   | Dec 15-16, 2021; Webinar/Teleconference          |
| • <b>Today discuss petition</b>  | <b>Jan 13, 2021, WRC; Webinar/Teleconference</b> |

**Background**

At its Dec 2021 meeting, FGC referred petition 2021-017 (Exhibit 1) to WRC for discussion and recommendation. The petition requests a number of changes to the big game hunting program, that fall broadly into five categories: General regulations, bear, elk, bighorn sheep, and deer.

***General Regulations***

- Party application - tag returns
- Return tag reissuance

***Bear***

- Second bear tag

***Elk***

- Antlerless hunts in the Marble Mountains and Siskiyou units
- Additional hunting opportunities
- Backup dates or longer seasons

***Bighorn sheep***

- Adding tags to archery and muzzleloader hunts

***Deer***

- General deer tag archery/rifle separation
- Split rifle C zones
- Split X3B zone
- General hunts G40-G44
- Muzzleloader hunts M8 and M13-M16
- Split C zone archery tags

## COMMITTEE STAFF SUMMARY FOR JANUARY 13, 2022 WRC

- Establish new hunts A26, A34, and A36
- Establish new apprentice hunts J23 and J24

See Exhibit 1 for more details regarding each proposal. Today's meeting begins a process in which WRC will vet these proposals with DFW, stakeholders, and the public; this item is for discussion only.

**Significant Public Comments**

A hunter writes to: (1) support some of the petition's proposals for bear hunting, the tag drawing system, and hunting zone boundary changes, (2) offer a new proposal, and (3) recommend that an implementation plan be developed (Exhibit 2).

**Recommendation (N/A)****Exhibits**

1. [Petition 2021-017](#), received Sep 2, 2021
2. [Email from Mike Costello](#), received Dec 31, 2021

**Committee Direction/Recommendation (N/A)**



Tracking Number: **[(2021-017)]**

To request a change to regulations under the authority of the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission), you are required to submit this completed form to: California Fish and Game Commission, (physical address) 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1320, Sacramento, CA 95814, (mailing address) P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94244-2090 or via email to [FGC@fgc.ca.gov](mailto:FGC@fgc.ca.gov). Note: This form is not intended for listing petitions for threatened or endangered species (see Section 670.1 of Title 14).

Incomplete forms will not be accepted. A petition is incomplete if it is not submitted on this form or fails to contain necessary information in each of the required categories listed on this form (Section I). A petition will be rejected if it does not pertain to issues under the Commission's authority. A petition may be denied if any petition requesting a functionally equivalent regulation change was considered within the previous 12 months and no information or data is being submitted beyond what was previously submitted. If you need help with this form, please contact Commission staff at (916) 653-4899 or [FGC@fgc.ca.gov](mailto:FGC@fgc.ca.gov).

## **SECTION I: Required Information.**

*Please be succinct. Responses for Section I should not exceed five pages*

### **1. Person or organization requesting the change (Required)**

Name of primary contact person: Dan Ryan

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone number: [REDACTED]

Email address: [REDACTED]

### **2. Rulemaking Authority (Required) - Reference to the statutory or constitutional authority of the Commission to take the action requested: Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Also see attached for more details**

### **3. Overview (Required) - Summarize the proposed changes to regulations: See Attached. I was a part of an R# subcommittee with the department where we looked at creative ways to change the licensing system. Adding change to the big Game structure was one topic discussed but not finalized. I have been working with Department staff on new ideas for solving problems with the Big Game draw as well as providing additional opportunity for hunters. The Department needs to be adaptable and flexible. In the attachment I have provided a number of Big Game changes including new hunts and seasons. I am not asking that we try and implement all in 2022 however I would like to start the discussion and have a phased approach.**

### **4. Rationale (Required) - Describe the problem and the reason for the proposed change:**

Though the department has seen a decline in hunting license sales it has seen a substantial increase in hunter participation/demand in big game tags. To better serve the outdoor enthusiast in the state as well as provide additional opportunity with no incremental increase in harvest the department must adapt and make changes.

### **Why is this important?**

- Millions of dollars are generated through the Big Game application and tag system. This system should evolve to meet demands and increase opportunity, or it will be at risk of losing participation. From 2014 to 2020 there has



been over 17,500 additional applications, this is a substantial amount of money and interest generated. It would not make sense to not try and adapt to the increase.

- CDFW needs to manage Big Game herds and hunters in a flexible manner. Not making adjustments on an annual or bi-annual basis is not effective, nor is that method of active management in responding to changing resource conditions/hunter preferences.
- The Big Game opportunities are stagnant and have not changed or been modified (other than annual season dates and tag allocations) for years. Stagnant environments tend to lead to decreased participation and missed opportunities for improvement.
- Other states such as Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and Wyoming are constantly adding opportunities based on biological resources and hunter demand and have been successful. The results speak for themselves and this approach has been proven to work.
- Big Game hunters as a whole are incredibly frustrated with the preference point system and the number of years it takes to draw a “premium hunt”.
- Simply changing dates or adding a few premium hunts in general zones can increase draw odds and spread the point pool of applicants.
- Builds rapport with hunters and CDFW. Adds to the benefit of active management and responsiveness of the department to hunters.
- By spreading the already allocated tags to new hunts, this method should result in little change to overall harvest.

## **SECTION II: Optional Information**

**5. Date of Petition: 8/30/2021**

**6. Category of Proposed Change**

☐ Sport Fishing

☐ Commercial Fishing

☒ Hunting

☐ Other, please specify: [\[Click here to enter text\]](#)

**7. The proposal is to:** *(To determine section number(s), see current year regulation booklet or <https://govt.westlaw.com/calregs>)*

☒ Amend Title 14 Section(s) [\[Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Also see attached for more details\]](#)

☒ Add New Title 14 Section(s): Sections 200, 203, 265, 460, 3051, 3452, 3453, 3953 and 4334, Fish and Game Code. Also see attached for more details

☐ Repeal Title 14 Section(s): [\[Click here to enter text.\]](#)

**8. If the proposal is related to a previously submitted petition that was rejected, specify the tracking number of the previously submitted petition** [\[Click here to enter text\]](#)  
Or ☒ Not applicable.

**9. Effective date:** If applicable, identify the desired effective date of the regulation.  
If the proposed change requires immediate implementation, explain the nature of the emergency: [\[The 2022 changes should be voted on in December in order for implementation to occur.\]](#)



10. **Supporting documentation:** Identify and attach to the petition any information supporting the proposal including data, reports and other documents: Attached proposal showing justification and work with CDFW, partners and members of the public.
11. **Economic or Fiscal Impacts:** Identify any known impacts of the proposed regulation change on revenues to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, individuals, businesses, jobs, other state agencies, local agencies, schools, or housing: All of these changes have direct and indirect impacts with communities, individuals, businesses, jobs and the department. They would generate additional revenue for the department as well as increase customer satisfaction.
12. **Forms:** If applicable, list any forms to be created, amended or repealed:  
[Click here to enter text. ]

### SECTION 3: FGC Staff Only

Date received: [9/02/21 ]

FGC staff action:

- ☐ Accept - complete  
☐ Reject - incomplete  
☐ Reject - outside scope of FGC authority

Tracking Number

Date petitioner was notified of receipt of petition and pending action: [\_\_\_\_\_]

Meeting date for FGC consideration: [10/14/21 receive, 12/15-16/21 action]

FGC action:

- ☐ Denied by FGC  
☐ Denied - same as petition [\_\_\_\_\_]  
Tracking Number  
☐ Granted for consideration of regulation change

## **Petition for Big Game Hunt changes**

Submitted By: Dan Ryan

Coordination with:

CDFW:

Brian Ehler

Nathan Graveline

Mark Abraham

Lassen Fish and Game Commission

NGO:

Dale McDougal- California Deer Association

Kevin Vella- National Wild Turkey Federation

Public:

Over 15 members of the public have been apart of review and compilation of ideas going into this proposal.

### **Background:**

I was a subcommittee leader for the 2019 R3 effort focusing on the Licensing restructuring. During this process our subcommittee generated creative ideas to simplify the licensing system and restructure some of the Big Game opportunities that have not been modified for decades.

Big Game opportunities are regulated through tag issuance. These tags are broken down throughout the state by locality, species, sex, time of year, method of take and whether its available for adults or apprentice (youth under 16). These tags/opportunities are allocated through the CDFW's online system where a user can purchase a hunting and fishing license as well as apply for tags.

Though the department has seen a decline in hunting license sales it has seen a substantial increase in hunter participation/demand in big game tags. To better serve the outdoor enthusiast in the state as well as provide additional opportunity with no incremental increase in harvest the department must adapt and make changes.

State	2014 Total Deer Applications	2019 Total Deer Applications	2020 Total Deer Applications
CA	71,810	81,513	89,403
*Estimates based on CDFW available data.			

### **What other states are doing:**

This increase in demand is not unique to CA. All of the western states have seen substantial increases in the number of applicants entering the tag draws or purchasing tags. Nevada, Idaho and California are some that have seen the most substantial increases. Nevada and Idaho are looking of creative ways to provide additional opportunities without increasing harvest or negatively impacting big game populations long term. Changes are needed to reduce the increased frustration with the system as well

as ultimately not losing hunters/applicants in the future; the same hunters that will fund and advocate for conservation of our wildlife resources in the future.

Idaho adds, modifies, and removes big game tags/opportunities every season setting period (two years) based on local biologist recommendations and public input. This has allowed new hunts, season dates and opportunities to be provided and has in turn spread applications out based on hunter interest and changes in populations. Applicants are allowed one deer tag with an option to purchase second tags when available at a certain date or if tags are turned back by hunters that cannot participate in the hunt.

Nevada recently has seen a substantial increase in applicants in the past 5 years, they in turn have been implementing creative solutions for providing additional opportunity. Example: Starting in 2021, they are re-issuing tags that are turned back 30 days and less to hunters willing to go. This means if a tag is turned back the day before the season, they will work to reissue those, even if it happens during the season. It provides increased opportunity for hunters.

### **Why is this important?**

- Millions of dollars are generated through the Big Game application and tag system. This system should evolve to meet demands and increase opportunity, or it will be at risk of losing participation. From 2014 to 2020 there has been over 17,500 additional applications, this is a substantial amount of money and interest generated. It would not make sense to not try and adapt to the increase.
- CDFW needs to manage Big Game herds and hunters in a flexible manner. Not making adjustments on an annual or bi-annual basis is not effective, nor is that method of active management in responding to changing resource conditions/hunter preferences.
- The Big Game opportunities are stagnant and have not changed or been modified (other than annual season dates and tag allocations) for years. Stagnant environments tend to lead to decreased participation and missed opportunities for improvement.
- Other states such as Idaho, Nevada, Arizona and Wyoming are constantly adding opportunities based on biological resources and hunter demand and have been successful. The results speak for themselves and this approach has been proven to work.
- Big Game hunters as a whole are incredibly frustrated with the preference point system and the number of years it takes to draw a “premium hunt”.
- Simply changing dates or adding a few premium hunts in general zones can increase draw odds and spread the point pool of applicants.
- Builds rapport with hunters and CDFW. Adds to the benefit of active management and responsiveness of the department to hunters.
- By spreading the already allocated tags to new hunts, this method should result in little change to overall harvest.

### **Increased harvest from “late” hunts**

- There would be higher success in some of the proposed hunts below which occur during the “rut” breeding season. If tags and harvest is modeled and tag allocations are spread between hunts there would not likely be an increase in take in the zones.
- Reducing general tags to accommodate increase in higher success hunts would be easily done and allow for not net increase harvest.

### **Proposals**

While there are many potential proposals, we would like to move the following forward some of the following for consideration for the 2022 Big Game hunting season. **A table is also provided of a proposed roll out in order to alleviate large workload of implementing multiple changes in one season.**



## **General**

### **Party Applications Return Tags Rule**

#### **Current rule:**

To return an elk, pronghorn, or bighorn sheep tag, you must mail the tag along with a written request for your preference points to be reinstated. The tag and request must be postmarked before the earliest date that the tag is valid for hunting. If approved, tag will be refunded (minus the 2021 nonrefundable processing fee of \$31.93) and your preference points will be reinstated, plus one preference point for the species for the current license year (CCR T14-708.14(k)). To return a premium deer hunt tag, you must mail the tag along with a written request for your preference points to be reinstated. The tag must be postmarked before the earliest date the tag is valid for hunting. If the request is approved, your preference points will be reinstated, plus one preference point for deer for the current license year (CCR T14-708.14(j)). Premium deer hunt tags cannot be exchanged and are nonrefundable.

#### **Proposed Change:** Add Language

A person surrendering a tag awarded through a group application is eligible for the following:

(a) if all group members surrender their permits more than XX days before the start of the season for which the permit is valid, all group members may:

- (i) have previously acquired preference points reinstated plus one for that years application period;
- (ii) applicants may be eligible for a refund consistent with Section XXXX;

Notwithstanding the limitations in this section, a person who obtains a permit through a group application may surrender that permit after the opening date of the applicable hunting season and have previously acquired bonus points or preference points for the permit species restored, provided the person:

- (a) is a member of United States Armed Forces or public health or public safety organization and is deployed or mobilized in the interest of national defense or national emergency;
- (b) surrenders the permit to the department, with the tag attached and intact, or signs an affidavit verifying the permit is no longer in their possession within one year of the end of hunting season authorized by the permit; and
- (c) satisfies the requirements for receiving a refund in Subsections R657-42-5(3)(c) and (d).

**What does this prevent?** Many in the hunting community refer to this as the “Grandma Rule” and it is utilized to circumvent the draw system. Example: John Doe has 0 points and his grandma has 12 points. They apply as a party for deer and have an average of 6 points  $(0+12/2)$ . They are successful drawing X4. John Doe plans on hunting while Grandma returns tag and request for points to be reinstated. CDFW reinstates points she now has 13 points and John Doe has zero and goes on the hunt. John Doe can then apply with Grandma next year and split 13 points....This can be done over and over again allowing John to get tags year after year using grandmas points.

Party hunt members in a group application are able to return their party tag to the Department but will not receive a refund or Preference points unless all members of that party also return their tags to the Department.

**Pro:** Prevents the draw system from being circumvented, increases draw odds, creates fairness.

**Con:** Additional programming and workload to track.

**Who else Does this?** Nevada Department of Wildlife implemented this in 2020, Utah implemented in early 2000's.

## **Returned Tag Reissuance**

### **Current Rule:**

Hunters who have been issued a premium deer, elk, antelope, or a Bighorn sheep tag and cannot hunt may return their unused tag to the license and revenue branch by mail before opening day of the hunt. To return one of these tags, you must mail the unused tag along with a written request for your preference points to be reinstated postmarked before the earliest date that the tag is valid. If approved, the tag will be refunded, minus a processing fee, and your points reinstated, plus one for the current year. These tags are then issued to alternates. If tag is not accepted by the alternative the tag goes unused.

### **Proposed Change:**

Elk, Sheep, Premium deer, and antelope tags returned by successful tagholders would be issued to alternates. If the tag is not accepted by the alternates then the tag would be made available and can be purchased online on a first-come first-serve basis. Tags that have seasons that have already started would still be available for those willing to accept the shorter timeframe and planning. Those who receive tags in this manner would forfeit preference points.

**Pro:** Tags have a less likely chance of going unused. Additional opportunity for unsuccessful hunters. Additional sales.

**Cons:** Additional work, online programming, and overhead cost.

## **Second Bear Tag Option**

### **Current Rule:**

Qualified individuals may purchase one bear tag per year. Tag quota, must cease hunting if bear harvest reaches quota.

### **Proposed Change:**

Successful bear hunters upon completion of harvest report and CDFW validation may purchase a second Bear tag at \$XX.XX. \*\*\*Potential addition: If bear harvest reaches 80% of quota no second tags would be issued.

**Pro:** Increases opportunity, sales, revenue, bear harvest.

**Con:** Additional work, could reach quota faster, preventing people with one bear tag to lose opportunity- Low probability since bear harvest have not reach quota since 2012.

## **General Deer Tag Archery/Rifle Separation**

### **Background:**

General A, B, D zones tags allow hunters to hunt during the general archery and general rifle seasons. There are three sets of hunters that utilize these tags:

1. Archery only hunters- Hunters that only participate in the archery season
2. Rifle only hunters- Hunters that only participate in the rifle season.
3. Combo Hunters- Hunters that participate in both archery and general seasons.

### **Problem:**

- Wildland fires have closed public lands during the months of July through October. This has created a hardship for many of the hunters listed above as well as additional work for CDFW on returned tags.
- Many rifle hunters (#2) have been extremely upset since they cannot turn tags since the closures have happened after the archery season has already started.
- Archery hunters (#1) are upset that they are missing hunting opportunity with the early season being impacted.

### **Proposed Change**

1. General A, B, D zones tags are only valid for the General rifle seasons.
2. Propose adding an additional date(s) to the Current AO (Archery Only) tag for each zone.

Example:

Hunters who purchase and Archery Only (AO) tag may hunt an additional 9\* days starting the following day after the rifle season in that zone closes. \*Days can be shorter

Zone D6 Example:

- General Rifle Tag Season- September 18 through October 31, 2021
- General AO Tag Season for D6- August 21 through September 12, 2021 & November 1-7
- Tag allocation: TBD

Pro

- Additional opportunity for Archery hunters.
- Additional opportunity for Archery hunters whose season was closed due to wildfire
- Allows general rifle only hunters to turn tags bag later since the season has not started.

Cons

- Combo hunters lose opportunity.
- Difficult to track /Confusing initial release to public.

\*\*\*Propose doing this as a test in all zones or just some zones.

## **General Premium Zones**

### **Proposed Change**

#### **Split rifle C Zones**

Currently the C zones are lumped into one zone (C1-4). The zones currently have separate seasons established. While hunting occurs in all zones, C4 has the highest concentrations of hunters.

##### **Current Tags**

- C1-4- 8,150 tags

Proposed Tags- \*Would be based on CDFW data.

- C1-1,766
- C2-1,766
- C3-1,766
- C4-2,852

**Pros-** C Zone tags are becoming harder to draw and if they were split it would allow hunters who want easier draw odds to look at the less popular zones such as C1-3. Spread applicants across zones, reduces hunter congestion and gives biologists better harvest data.

**Cons-** Reduces hunter flexibility by having to choose zone up front.

#### **Split Zones X3b**

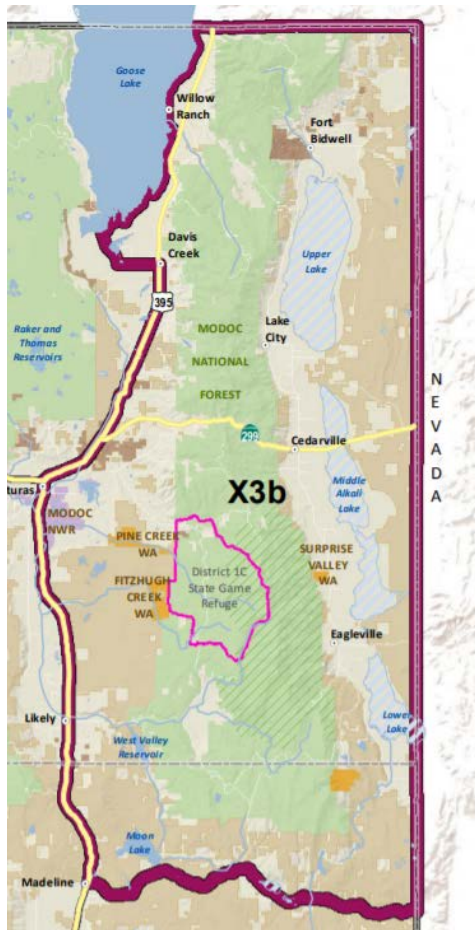
This zone is highly sought after and very large. There are high concentrations of use in specific portions of this zone leaving many portions of the unit not hunted or with low use. The zone has main roads that travers West to East through the Zone and could be used to split the zone into two. This would not result in a tag allocation increase but splits them based on population estimates.

##### **Current Tag Allocations**

- X3B-499

**X3B North-** Keep existing Northern, West and East Boundaries, however, change the southern boundary to Hwy 299. 220 tags

**X3b South-** Keep existing Southern, West and East Boundaries, however, change the Northern boundary to Hwy 299. 279 tags



**Pros-** Spreads draw applications. Adds two additional options for hunters to apply for therefore spreading the applications and cumulatively reducing preference point needed to draw other hunts.

**Cons-** Reduces tags in size and tag allocation in main unit. Reduces hunter's flexibility.

## General Methods

### Proposed Changes

1. **G40- A Zone North Late Rifle Tag**- 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after A zone rifle and runs for 9 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the A North Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone.
2. **G41- A Zone South Late Rifle Tag** - 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after A zone rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the A South Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone.
3. **G42- Snow Mountain Wilderness Early Rifle**- 5-15 tags, Starts the last Wednesday in July and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the B1 & B3 zone within the Snow Mountain Wilderness. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 35,000 tags that are allocated for B zone. Adds a unique opportunity for backcountry rifle hunters. Other states like Wyoming and Colorado have these same hunts.
4. **G43- Late Season Buck Hunt in d6**- 20-50 tags, Starts the first Saturday in November and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the D6 Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 10,000 tags that are allocated for D6 zone.
5. **G44- Late Season Buck Hunt in d7**-20-50 tags, Starts the first Saturday in November and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the D7 Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 9,000 tags that are allocated for D7 zone.

## Muzzleloader

### Proposed Changes

1. **M8- Bass Hill Boundary Change**- Allow hunters access to all of the X6a zone. Current M8 zone boundary is the Lassen County portion of X6A. There was no management reasoning for this. Originally the boundary was set for weather access and location of majority of the deer.
2. **M13- D3 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
3. **M14- D4 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
4. **M15- D5 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
5. **M16- Jackson State Forest Muzzleloader Buck Hunt**- 10-20 tags- Start the third Saturday in October and run for 9 consecutive days. Falls within the boundaries of the Jackson State forest in A Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone. Oregon has numerous late season blacktail hunts in dense forested zones. This could be similar.



## Archery

### Proposed Changes

#### Split Archery CZones

Currently the C zones are lumped into one zone (C1-4). The zones currently have separate seasons established. While hunting occurs in all zones, C4 has the highest concentrations of hunters.

Current Tags

- C1-4- 1,945 tags,

Proposed Tags- Would be based on CDFW data.

- C1-400
- C2-400
- C3-400
- C4-745

**Pros-** C Zone tags are becoming harder to draw and if they were split it would allow hunters who want easier draw odds to look at the less popular zones such as C1-3. Spread applicants across zones. Give biologist better harvest data.

**Cons-** Reduces hunter flexibility by having to choose zone up front.

#### New Hunts

1. **A26- Bass Hill Late Archery Boundary Change-** Allow hunters access to all of the X6a zone. Current A26 zone boundary is the Lassen County portion of X6A. There was no management reasoning for this. Originally the boundary was set for weather access and location of majority of the deer.
2. **A34- King Range Late Archery Buck-** 10-20 tags. Runs the last Saturday in October and runs for 9 consecutive days. Hunt falls within B4 zone. Can hunt private and public lands within the B4 zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 35,000 tags that are allocated for B zone. Oregon has numerous late season blacktail hunts in dense forested zones. This could be similar.
3. **A36- Late Archery buck in C1-C3-** 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after C3 rifle (latest date) and runs for 14 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the C1-C3 Zones. This tag allocation can be removed from the 12,870 tags that are allocated for C1-4 zones (includes rifle, general, archery and apprentice).

## Apprentice

### Proposed Changes

#### New Hunts

- **J23-Honey Lake Wildlife Area Early buck Rifle Hunt**- 5-10 tags. Apprentice can hunt on CDFW lands (Dakin & Fleming) wildlife areas. Starting the First Saturday in August and runs for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the tags that are allocated for X6a.
- **J24- Late Season X4 hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the First Saturday in November and runs for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the 599 tags that are allocated for X4 zone.

## Elk

### Proposed Changes

**Change Antlerless hunts in Marble Mountains and Siskiyou units.** Increases hunter pressure during Bull hunts creates many hunter conflicts during the hunts and a poor hunt experience. Cow Elk opportunity is generally better in the late fall. Northeastern Elk Zone made this exact change a few years ago. Hunting cows during the breeding seasons could affect breeding patterns.

- Hunt Code 301- Marble Mountain Antlerless- ~~September 8-19~~ October 2-10 or later.
- Hunt Code 401- Siskiyou Antlerless- ~~September 8-19~~ October 2-10 or later.

**Archery Opportunity-** Provide an additional Archery opportunity for Tule Elk

- Grizzly Island Period 1 Either Sex- August 7-9

### Non-resident opportunity

- Many non-residents do not participate in the Big Game Draw due to the fact that there is only One tag available for Elk and Antelope and 10% allocated for Sheep. The 10% rule should be for all three species. This would drive more non-resident applications while not impacting resident odds dramatically.

### Alternate Back-up Dates or longer seasons

- If Public lands are closed due to wildfire tagholders would be allowed to utilize their tags during the current season or during another date later in the year
- Example1- Marble Mountains Elk Tags- September 8-19- USFS is closed, tagholders can turn their tag back or hunt for 2-3 weeks in October or November\*\*\*TBD by CDFW staff
- Example 2- Siskiyou Elk Tag Dates- September 8 through November 30. Longer season allows for more opportunity as well as better success to meet Elk population objectives.

## Bighorn Sheep

Add 2-4 tags allocated for Archery and Muzzleloader hunts Zone wide (Zones 1, 3, 10). These could also be conducted outside of the general season to reduce congestion.

- Currently the state has ranges with excess sheep. Once Sheep herds reach a certain population, they become more susceptible to disease. Removing excess sheep in higher population units would assist in reducing likelihood of disease.
- The 2019 ED that was completed by the department allowed for the cdfw to allocate additional tags for specific units. Some of these units are at the max of their allocations however other are not.
- Archery and muzzleloader is a more difficult method of take and offering up to 4 more tags could result in 100% take however it is unlikely.
- As shown in the below table, many of the units have 100's of sheep and would justify additional harvest.

### Appendix 5: Desert Bighorn Sheep Surveys

Zone	Year	Survey Type	Number of Lambs	Number of Ewes	Number of Rams	Number of Unclassified	Total Counted
Marble Mountains & Clipper Mountains	2007	Helicopter	12	84	46	0	142
	2009	Helicopter	34	88	65	0	187
	2015	Helicopter	8	48	23	5	84
	2016	Ground	42	73	35	2	152
	2018	Ground	18	78	35	1	132
	2007	Helicopter	0	8	11	0	19
	2009	Helicopter	4	13	16	0	33
	2015	Helicopter	4	20	22	0	46
	2007	Helicopter	0	31	18	0	49
	2009	Helicopter	0	12	8	0	20
Clark Mountain  Kingston Range	2015	Helicopter	0	1	3	0	4
	2016	Helicopter	1	31	13	5	50
	2007	Helicopter	3	27	21	0	51
	2009	Helicopter	6	33	20	0	59
	2015	Helicopter	9	25	14	0	48
	2016	Helicopter	3	31	19	2	55
	2018	Helicopter	5	80	34	0	119
	2008	Helicopter	16	59	52	0	127
White Mountains	2009	Helicopter	16	60	29	2	107
	2015	Ground	46	69	82	20	217
	2016	Ground	26	43	9	22	100
	2018	Ground	36	124	62	1	223
	2007	Helicopter	12	59	38	0	109
Cady Mountains	2009	Helicopter	37	92	38	0	167
	2010	Helicopter	23	102	49	0	174
	2018	Helicopter	8	58	27	0	93
	2016	Helicopter	49	70	52	0	171
Newberry, Rodman and Ord Mountains	2018	Helicopter	35	95	72	0	202

# Proposal Table

2022 Implementation

2023 Implementation

2024 Implementation

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9	G42- Snow Mountain Wilderness Early Rifle	10	2024
10	G43- Late Season Buck Hunt in d6	10	2023
11	G44- Late Season Buck Hunt in d7	10	2023
12	M8- Bass Hill Muzzleloader Boundary Change	11	2022
13	M13- D3 Late Muzzleloader Hunt	11	2022
14	M14- D4 Late Muzzleloader Hunt	11	2022
15	M15- D5 Late Muzzleloader Hunt	11	2022
16	M16- Jackson State Forest Muzzleloader Buck Hunt	11	2024
17	A26- Bass Hill Late Archery Boundary Change	12	2022
18	Split Archery (A1) C Zones	12	2022
19	A34- King Range Late Archery Buck	12	2023
20	A36- Late Archery buck in C1-C3	12	2022
21	J23-Honey Lake Wildlife Area Early buck Rifle Hunt	13	2022

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# 2022 Big Game Proposals

Completed by Dan Ryan in Coordination with Sportsman groups and  
Local CDFW Biologist.





# Background



- CDFW R3 Committee- Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation
- Licensing structure committee identified the Big Game tags/hunts were outdated and need reform.
- Over 15 years of working with hunter groups and hearing frustrations about CDFW hunts.
- Collaborated with CDFW to ensure proposals meet goals and objectives of department.



# Why?

- Hunter environment is changing and CDFW should adapt to the needs.
- More applicants- Close to 20K new applicants in the Big Game drawing since 2014 making draw odds tough.
- Create better hunt opportunity and quality to continue to recruit and retain hunters.
- Increase revenue for CDFW.
- Increase Draw odds for Big Game Drawing
- Build Rappor with Sportsman- Shows that the Department is listening to the sportsman's complaints and request.



# General Changes

- Party Applications Return Tags Rule
  - Currently allows Any members of a party application to turn back a tag and get points reinstated.
  - Many use this rule to their advantage by putting in party members that have no intent to hunt.
  - Example: John Doe has 0 points, and his grandma has 12 points. They apply as a party for deer and have an average of 6 points  $(0+12/2)$ . They are successful drawing X4. John Doe plans on hunting while Grandma returns tag and request for points to be reinstated. CDFW reinstates points she now has 13 points and John Doe has zero and goes on the hunt. John Doe can then apply with Grandma next year and split 13 points....This can be done over and over again allowing John to get tags year after year using grandma's points.

# Returned Tag Reissuance

- Currently tags that are turned back are given to the alternates that were assigned through the drawing.
- It is unclear if this occurs on tags that are turned back the day prior to the season.
- Propose that CDFW make available tags turned back later, where by the time CDFW process the season has started and alternates are now available.

## Example:

- John Doe drew a X4 tag. He is planning on going however has an emergency the week before the hunt that prevents him from going. John follows CDFW rules and turns the tag back the day prior to the season. CDFW takes 3-4 days to process this return and places the tag back on the open market via Aspira where sportsman can purchase first come first serve.
- Colorado, Idaho and Nevada do this process and it works nice for providing additional opportunity as well as additional revenue for the department.

# Big Game Proposals

- **Second Bear Tag Option**

Qualified individuals may purchase one bear tag per year. Tag quota, must cease hunting if bear harvest reaches quota.

- **Proposed Change:**

Successful bear hunters upon completion of harvest report and CDFW validation may purchase a second Bear tag at \$XX.XX. \*\*\*Potential addition: If bear harvest reaches 80% of quota no second tags would be issued.



# General Premium Deer Hunts

## Split rifle C Zones

Currently the C zones are lumped into one zone (C1-4). The zones currently have separate seasons established. While hunting occurs in all zones, C4 has the highest concentrations of hunters.

Current Tags

- C1-4- 8,150 tags

Proposed Tags- \*Would be based on CDFW data.

- C1-1,766
- C2-1,766
- C3-1,766
- C4-2,852

- **Pros-** C Zone tags are becoming harder to draw and if they were split it would allow hunters who want easier draw odds to look at the less popular zones such as C1-3. Spread applicants across zones, reduces hunter congestion and gives biologists better harvest data.

- **Cons-** Reduces hunter flexibility by having to choose zone up front.

## Split Zones X3b

- This zone is highly sought after and very large. There are high concentrations of use in specific portions of this zone leaving many portions of the unit not hunted or with low use. The zone has main roads that travers West to East through the Zone and could be used to split the zone into two. This would not result in a tag allocation increase but splits them based on population estimates.

Current Tag Allocations

- X3B-499

**X3B North-** Keep existing Northern, West and East Boundaries, however, change the southern boundary to Hwy 299. 220 tags

**X3b South-** Keep existing Southern, West and East Boundaries, however, change the Northern boundary to Hwy 299. 279 tags

**Pros-** Spreads draw applications. Adds two additional options for hunters to apply for therefore spreading the applications and cumulatively reducing preference point needed to draw other hunts.

**Cons-** Reduces tags in size and tag allocation in main unit. Reduces hunter's flexibility.

# General Methods Deer Hunts

1. **G40- A Zone North Late Rifle Tag**- 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after A zone rifle and runs for 9 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the A North Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone.
2. **G41- A Zone South Late Rifle Tag** - 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after A zone rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the A South Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone.
3. **G42- Snow Mountain Wilderness Early Rifle**- 5-15 tags, Starts the last Wednesday in July and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the B1 & B3 zone within the Snow Mountain Wilderness. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 35,000 tags that are allocated for B zone. Adds a unique opportunity for backcountry rifle hunters. Other states like Wyoming and Colorado have these same hunts.
4. **G43- Late Season Buck Hunt in d6**- 20-50 tags, Starts the first Saturday in November and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the D6 Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 10,000 tags that are allocated for D6 zone.
5. **G44- Late Season Buck Hunt in d7**-20-50 tags, Starts the first Saturday in November and runs for 5 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the D7 Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 9,000 tags that are allocated for D7 zone.



# Deer Muzzleloader Hunts

1. **M8- Bass Hill Boundary Change**- Allow hunters access to all of the X6a zone. Current M8 zone boundary is the Lassen County portion of X6A. There was no management reasoning for this. Originally the boundary was set for weather access and location of majority of the deer.
2. **M13- D3 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
3. **M14- D4 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
4. **M15- D5 Late Muzzleloader Hunt**- 10-20 tags. Start the following Saturday after D3 rifle and run for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 33,000 tags that are allocated for D3-5 zone.
5. **M16- Jackson State Forest Muzzleloader Buck Hunt**- 10-20 tags- Start the third Saturday in October and run for 9 consecutive days. Falls within the boundaries of the Jackson State forest in A Zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 65,000 tags that are allocated for A zone. Oregon has numerous late season blacktail hunts in dense forested zones. This could be similar.

# Archery Deer Hunts

## Split Archery C Zones

Currently the C zones are lumped into one zone (C1-4). The zones currently have separate seasons established. While hunting occurs in all zones, C4 has the highest concentrations of hunters.

Current Tags

- C1-4- 1,945 tags,

Proposed Tags- Would be based on CDFW data.

- C1-400
- C2-400
- C3-400
- C4-745

**Pros-** C Zone tags are becoming harder to draw and if they were split it would allow hunters who want easier draw odds to look at the less popular zones such as C1-3. Spread applicants across zones. Give biologist better harvest data.

**Cons-** Reduces hunter flexibility by having to choose zone up front.

1. **A26- Bass Hill Late Archery Boundary Change-** Allow hunters access to all of the X6a zone. Current A26 zone boundary is the Lassen County portion of X6A. There was no management reasoning for this. Originally the boundary was set for weather access and location of majority of the deer.
2. **A34- King Range Late Archery Buck-** 10-20 tags. Runs the last Saturday in October and runs for 9 consecutive days. Hunt falls within B4 zone. Can hunt private and public lands within the B4 zone. This tag allocation can be removed from the general 35,000 tags that are allocated for B zone. Oregon has numerous late season blacktail hunts in dense forested zones. This could be similar.
3. **A36- Late Archery buck in C1-C3-** 15-35 tags, Starts the following Saturday after C3 rifle (latest date) and runs for 14 consecutive days. Tag is good for all public and private lands within the C1-C3 Zones. This tag allocation can be removed from the 12,870 tags that are allocated for C1-4 zones (includes rifle, general, archery and apprentice).



# Apprentice Deer Hunts

- **J23-Honey Lake Wildlife Area Early buck Rifle Hunt-** 5-10 tags. Apprentice can hunt on CDFW lands (Dakin & Fleming) wildlife areas. Starting the First Saturday in August and runs for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the tags that are allocated for X6a.
- **J24- Late Season X4 hunt-** 10-20 tags. Start the First Saturday in November and runs for 9 consecutive days. This tag allocation can be removed from the 599 tags that are allocated for X4 zone.

# Elk Hunts

**Change Antlerless hunts in Marble Mountains and Siskiyou units.** Increases hunter pressure during Bull hunts creates many hunter conflicts during the hunts and a poor hunt experience. Cow Elk opportunity is generally better in the late fall. Northeastern Elk Zone made this exact change a few years ago. Hunting cows during the breeding seasons could affect breeding patterns.

- Hunt Code 301- Marble Mountain Antlerless- ~~September 8-19~~ October 2-10 or later.
- Hunt Code 401- Siskiyou Antlerless- ~~September 8-19~~ October 2-10 or later.

**Archery Opportunity-** Provide an additional Archery opportunity for Tule Elk

- Grizzly Island Period 1 Either Sex- August 7-9

## **Non-resident opportunity**

- Many non-residents do not participate in the Big Game Draw due to the fact that there is only One tag available for Elk and Antelope and 10% allocated for Sheep. The 10% rule should be for all three species. This would drive more non-resident applications while not impacting resident odds dramatically.

## **Alternate Back-up Dates or longer seasons**

- If Public lands are closed due to wildfire tagholders would be allowed to utilize their tags during the current season or during another date later in the year
- Example1- Marble Mountains Elk Tags- September 8-19- USFS is closed, tagholders can turn their tag back or hunt for 2-3 weeks in October or November\*\*\*TBD by CDFW staff
- Example 2- Siskiyou Elk Tag Dates- September 8 through November 30. Longer season allows for more opportunity as well as better success to meet Elk population objectives.

# Sheep Hunts

Add 2-4 tags allocated for Archery and Muzzleloader hunts Zone wide (Zones 1, 3, 10). These could also be conducted outside of the general season to reduce congestion.

- Currently the state has ranges with excess sheep. Once Sheep herds reach a certain population, they become more susceptible to disease. Removing excess sheep in higher population units would assist in reducing likelihood of disease.
- The 2019 ED that was completed by the department allowed for the cdfw to allocate additional tags for specific units. Some of these units are at the max of their allocations however other are not.
- Archery and muzzleloader is a more difficult method of take and offering up to 4 more tags could result in 100% take however it is unlikely.
- As shown in the below table, many of the units have 100's of sheep and would justify additional harvest.

# Phased Approach

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**Thank you!**





From: Michael Costello [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, December 31, 2021 11:42 AM

To: FGC <FGC@fgc.ca.gov>

Subject: WRC meeting - Petition 2021-017

WARNING: This message is from an external source. Verify the sender and exercise caution when clicking links or opening attachments.

Hello and Happy New Year! I am submitting feedback regarding Petition 2021-017. First & foremost I am pleased that this broad-reaching petition has been submitted. More important than the specific outcome of each change requested, I believe this petition sets the stage for phased implementation of innovative ideas which support new hunt opportunities, enable improved herd management and yield net-new funding for CDFW programs.

I support the following outcomes inspired by Petition 2021-017:

1) For 2022: 2nd OTC bear tag for the 2022 fall season

- available to all licensed hunters until the quota is met

- net new funding potential of \$100k to \$500k / use it for large carnivore population studies

- no change needed for the quota, hunt zones/regions, or seasons.

- \*\*this is NOT what the petition has in it. The petition language which limits a 2nd tag to only those who have already taken a bear is too limiting and does not enable hunters or the Dept to equitably or fully take advantage of this new opportunity.

2) For 2022: Close the grandma loophole. Fairness, equity, utilization of all tags allocated and a more effective use of the Draw system will result.

3) For 2022: Improve the returned tag resale system. This is a service that Kalkomey and CDFW should be able to establish and execute with net-new funding coming from it. If they cannot achieve this result for 2022, CDFW should be charged with the goal of putting it into effect no later than 2023.

4) For 2022: M8 and A26 Bass Hill hunt boundary changes.

5) For 2023 implementation: I believe it will be best if the NGOs, WRC, F&G and CDFW agree to break up the petition into species-specific subsections, with direction that revised, prioritized and phased regulation suggestions are brought back in time for implementation in 2023 and 2024 seasons. Working backward from the Dec. 2022 meeting, a schedule for this should be drafted and shared publicly. This would give the hunting community and all stakeholders time to process data, ingest feedback, integrate mgmt plan changes and establish a path forward.

I plan to attend the WRC meeting via Zoom and look forward to the discussion that takes place.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the California hunting community.

Mike Costello

Hunting Aint Easy (IG)

Hunting Aint Easy (Podcast)

