

Archery Review Committee Meeting, March 8, 214

Controlled Hunt Criteria

Mark presented criteria to move archery hunts from a male-only bag limit to an either-sex bag limit for both deer and elk (document titled 'General Either Sex Archery Criteria'). The committee discussed these criteria at length.

Highlights of discussion:

ODFW:

- There are Management Units, particularly in western Oregon, that are not surveyed aurally every year. Biologists have asked for at least 2 years of surveys in the last 3 years to verify population and calf ratio estimates and trends. Having a population $\geq 110\%$ of MO is not needed for three consecutive years. But seeing it rise each year, and having at least two data points is needed.
- There are reasons biologists may recommend an either-sex bag limit sooner than these criteria indicate (e.g., damage complaints), but we need to leave that flexibility for the biologists.
- Recap from Tom on tags tied together for PDP and either sex bag limit for committee members that had not yet been to prior meetings.
- **Mark** will add the 2 years of surveys criteria to the deer portion of the document as it is in the elk portion.
- It is difficult to provide hard criteria (such as XX% of MO) for the implementation of a controlled hunt. Factors considered when developing a controlled hunt proposal include population trajectory, recruitment of young, relation to MO, percent of biological surplus left over for population increase, biological significance of likely harvest, land ownership patterns, damage, etc... It's more of an issue when we move to general season; these criteria outline when this change becomes mandatory unless there is a strong explanation for an exception. Biologists have the ability to go to general archery hunts sooner than the mandate, as archery hunters are not usually the hunters that have the most impact on antlerless take.

Q: Why was deer added to document when committee has been discussing only antlerless elk harvest? A: It made sense to have criteria in place for deer so that something is in place for biologists to use.

Q: Is 110% too high? A: It allows for a 10% buffer for the biologist to not have a frequent change and prevent the yoyo effect.

Consider a range for percentage of MO and calf/cow ratio (20 – 30) – may be more accepted by bow hunters rather than a firm number.

Top items to address:

110% - some committee members don't like the hard and fast number (too conservative of a number), although a member acknowledged a number is what was asked for at the last meeting. Several members want to not get wrapped up in "A" number and give biologists tools needed to manage the resource.

Distribution - Tom clarification – there could be general season either sex opportunity but not necessarily for the entire unit, such as not on NF or private land. This would be applied to populations going up or down. Mark will add language to the effect of “opportunity may not include the entire Wildlife Management Unit”.

Gradient of Agreement Vote (from 5 to 1) to tentatively support the General Either-Sex Archery Criteria with the suggested amendments (highlighted in yellow):

5 – Endorsement – 7 votes

4 – Support with reservations – 7 votes

3 – More discussion needed – 1 votes

2 – Don't like but will support – 0 votes

1 – Serious disagreement (minority report) – 2 votes (Oregon Hunters Association)

Those who voted a “1” need to write up a minority report prior to next meeting, which will be shared with the committee as well as the Commission.

OHA explained their rationale for voting a ‘1’. They asked to see something on paper showing what factors biologist use when going to a controlled hunt. OHA generally does not support antlerless hunting when a population is below MO. OHA can support guidelines that clearly show opportunity and what makes hunts go to controlled season. (Mark noted that he is reluctant to have the criteria to be so specific that biologist are boxed in and have no flexibility to make decisions). Mark agreed to put something together for the group as to why hunts may go to controlled season.

From committee member that voted for 3 – Why can't we use ranges (example 95-105%) instead of a single threshold (110%)?

Tom – the biologists have flexibility to move a hunt to general season before hitting the 110%. If we had a range, such as 95-110%, hunters could ask why we weren't making the switch when we hit that lowest end of the range.

After discussion, one member who originally voted as a three switched to a four.

Mark will update the criteria document and the group will take another vote at the next meeting.

A committee member wants to revisit this in 5 years to evaluate how ODFW implemented the committee's recommendations. Sarah – we will put time on the final meeting's agenda to discuss this.

Tied Elk and Deer Tags:

Mark reviewed the tied tags issue, which is also outlined in the 'ODFW Archery Issues Backgrounder' document sent out prior to last meeting. This is referring to those units where the general deer opportunity is granted only when the hunter has a valid controlled elk tag for the same unit. This has caused concern in the three premier elk units (Mt Emily, Wenaha, Walla Walla) where loss of archery deer hunting opportunity was an unintended consequence.

The group acknowledged the benefits to enforcement, and Lt David Anderson relayed statistics indicating a reduction in elk poaching cases.

OSP (Lt. Anderson): An error was found in data provided at the last meeting, the number should have been 18 illegally harvest elk in the three units over a 5 year period prior to the tied tag. Data from 2008 – 2012. There were twenty six illegally taken elk over same time period during rifle seasons. No illegal archery harvest has been detected since the tied tags went into effect.

Regarding when the enforcement cases related to archery season were made, 4 (22%) were seized during first 2 weeks of season, 5 (28%) second half of season and 9 (50%) were seized after season ended. However, this does not indicate when the violations occurred because they may not have been discovered and seized until long after the violation occurred.

Lt. Anderson – OSP role is to do enforcement, not to make management decisions. We have many factors in determining tags/harvest: legal & illegal harvest and predation (wolves will be a factor in years to come).

To address the tied tag issue (Mt Emily, Wenaha, Walla Walla ONLY), the group identified a list of management options and evaluated their merits.

Option discussed:

- A. No change
- B. Sever the tie
- C. Controlled hunts with high or unlimited tag numbers
- D. ~~Sign in and out of unit~~ (Idea was dropped – not feasible)
- E. Limit deer hunting for the first part of general season (9 day, 14 day, or 16 day?)
- F. Establish late season controlled deer hunt for buck mule deer or a white-tailed deer
- G. Controlled for archery deer, if the hunter has a general season elk tag it would become a spike only tag statewide (so they could not shoot a big bull and claim from another unit)
- H. Controlled buck deer tag good for 7 days before general archery deer season then becomes valid for the statewide general deer season
- I. Units open for deer 7 days prior to general deer season, no change to elk season
- J. Hunt private lands with general season deer tag, controlled elk tag needed to hunt deer on public lands
- K. ~~Sever the tie in select units~~ (Idea dropped, desire to treat all three units the same)

Criteria to consider when evaluating options above using 2011 (before elk tag was required to archery hunt for deer) as the benchmark:

- Opportunity
- Biological impact
- Enforcement
- Is it a “like” opportunity?

The group decided to use their Gradient of Agreement decision process to measure the level of support for the various options.

GRADIENT SCALE

- 5 – Endorsement
- 4 – Support with reservations
- 3 – More discussion needed
- 2 – Don't like but will support
- 1 – Serious disagreement
(requires minority report)

Option #	GRADIENT OF AGREEMENT				
	5	4	3	2	1
A	1	2	6	3	3
B	0	2	2	9	4
C	3	6	5	2	0
D	--	--	--	--	--
E	3	6	4	2	0
F	3	3	3	3	5
G	1	1	1	8	5
H	2	7	3	3	1
I	3	1	3	5	4
J	3	6	2	4	2
K	--	--	--	--	--

Options with the most support were C, E, H, and J, each with 9 votes of good support. An additional vote was taken on the four remaining options, and C and E remained.

Two new options were identified by modifying options already voted on.

E2 - Controlled deer hunt for the first 9 days of the season. Tag levels would be set based on the hunting history of that unit.

Hybrid - Controlled deer hunt: first 9 days of the season includes public lands, the full 30 days of the season on private lands. The deer tag would not be tied to the elk tag

Gradient of agreement – second vote on top 4 options

Option	5	4	3	2	1
C	1	0	3	8	2
E	2	5	2	4	3
E2	9	1	1	3	1
Hybrid	3	5	1	5	1

Option E2 had the most support from the committee, and the group supported a 9 day hunt as opposed to 16 day. (Note from Mark: in reality in most years, the number of days will probably be 10- since the Labor Day weekend occurs on the second weekend of the archery season and we would not eliminate the Monday holiday in that circumstance). The committee agreed to move this recommendation forward to the public and Commission. Oregon Bow Hunters (OBH) will write a minority report explaining the reasons they do not support this option.

Add to parking lot – sever the tie in select units other than the premier

Public Testimony

Dave Verstage – congratulations OSP and biologists for doing a great job. He has found that he is getting into more elk on his hunts than he has in a long time. A lot of out of state bow hunting associations coming into Oregon, so if we can get away from general seasons that would be good.

The next meeting will be March 22nd in the Commission Room. Remaining issues to be discussed are as follows:

- Portability of tags when it causes displacement of elk (Tier 1 Issue) – **Mark** identified some data needs and will get that out to the group before the next meeting.
- Elk displacement from public to private land, winter range conflicts (if not addressed by portability discussion)
- Antler restrictions/bag limits
- Crowding (if not addressed by portability discussion)

Mark – portability issue will be one of the tougher issues the group discusses. Portability has contributing effect on crowding issues around the state. Have thoughtful discussions regarding this at the next meeting. Some controlled hunts may not be suitable for general season as well. Some hunts it is good to be available as a general season. **Mark** will put together a background paper and get out to committee prior to next meeting.