

Minority Report

Issue or Problem:

In October 2012, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (hereinafter, Commission), acting on a recommendation from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (hereinafter ODFW), controlled all archery elk hunting in the trophy elk units – Wenaha, Walla Walla and Mt. Emily – and required bowhunters to have a controlled elk tag before they could hunt deer in any of the units. Prior to this action, archery deer hunting in the units was a general season opportunity with a 30-day season. The 2012 action, together with the Commission's June 2013 establishment of the number of tags offered for the controlled elk hunts, resulted in a reduction of archery deer hunting opportunity in the trophy elk units of at least 40 percent and more likely 60 percent or greater.

ARPAC Recommendation:

Establish a controlled archery deer hunt offering a generous number of controlled deer tags in the trophy elk units to run concurrently with the first nine (9) days of the controlled archery elk season for hunters without a controlled elk tag. The controlled deer tag would also be valid as a general archery deer tag in other units. Individuals with a controlled archery elk tag and a general archery deer tag can hunt deer in the unit where the elk tag is valid during the entire archery season.

Minority Position:

Oregon Bow Hunters (OBH) does not support the ARPAC recommendation for the following reasons:

1. ODFW presented no argument either at the 2012 or 2013 Commission meetings or at ARPAC that restrictions or controls on archery deer hunting were warranted or necessary from a biological (deer herd management) perspective.
2. Controlled hunts are never an acceptable in-kind replacement for loss of general hunts when no biological justification for the controlled hunt restrictions has been made.
3. A 9-day controlled hunt, in and of itself, is an absolutely inadequate replacement for loss of a 30-day general deer hunting opportunity, especially for local-area bowhunters who might well have been able to hunt deer many evenings after getting off work during a 30-day season, but who will now find their opportunity to do so reduced 70 percent by a 9-day season.
4. Because of the design of Oregon's controlled hunt system, a controlled hunt does not restore opportunity equally for all bowhunters who were able to hunt deer in the trophy units during a general season before the 2012-2013 changes went into place.

Since the 2012-2013 Commission decisions, ODFW has exclusively owned the reduction of archery deer hunting opportunity in the trophy elk units and has had to accept the resulting criticisms from Oregon's bowhunters. Now, ARPAC and its represented organizations (except OBH) will own 70 percent of the loss of deer hunting opportunity in the trophy elk units resulting from the Commission decisions and ODFW is neatly off the hook for the consequences resulting from its actions restricting archery hunting opportunity.

OBH reserves its right to oppose the ARPAC recommendation at the 2014 big game public meetings and before the Commission.