

A Proposal to Design and Implement a Program to Allocate Limited Non-resident and Resident Deer, Elk, and Antelope Hunting Licenses to Qualifying Wyoming Landowners

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Final Working Draft, Nov. 12, 2021

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been recent proposals by some in Wyoming to issue 10% of the total number of elk, deer, and antelope licenses to non-residents. Over the last two decades about 16% of the total number of elk, deer, and antelope licenses issued has been to non-residents. The percentage of NR antelope and deer hunters have varied considerably, and been above the 16% level , because of the inability to fill deer and antelope Resident hunter quotas on Wyoming's large parcels of private lands in the eastern half of the state in most years. Much of that variation is because the eastern half of Wyoming is dominated by private land and in many years up to 30% of the antelope and 20-25% of the deer licenses go to NR because Resident hunters do not acquire the left over licenses. We have conferred with several other resident hunters, non-resident hunters, retired Game and Fish personnel, large landowners with considerable numbers of big game using their property, and outfitters over a change to 10% non-residents for elk deer, and antelope. At current levels over 9,700 NR elk, deer, and antelope licenses are issued resulting in 16% of the total number of licenses , and at a very significant cost valuation to the Game and Fish and state and local economies .

CONSIDERATIONS

We have generated the following points to consider regarding a decrease from the current levels of NR big game licenses issued.

- ❑ Wyoming Game and Fish Dept. income for management of wildlife
- ❑ Wyoming state and local economy associated with NR hunters
- ❑ The economy of and ability to support the Wyoming Outfitter Businesses and their ability to provide local seasonal jobs and direct dollars to the community and state
- ❑ The ability of farmers and ranchers to provide NR and Res. hunting opportunity is related to the diversity of income sources generated to help enable resident farmers and ranchers to remain in business. (*NOTE: The attached report by Jim Schwartz summarizes the contributions of hunting big game to Wyoming family ranch/farm operations and state and local economies.)
- ❑ Loss of family farms and ranches often results in more subdivisions and loss of both agricultural land and wildlife land uses.

GOAL: Design and implement an additional component to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Landowner access program with the ability to provide qualifying Wyoming private landowners with an allocated number of resident and non-resident hunting licenses for elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and pronghorn antelope.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

- ❑ A team made up of two resident landowners, two private land outfitters, appropriate Game and Fish personnel (Director, Access program reps., one game warden, and one biologist) would design all of the program components and processes.
- ❑ A determination will be made by the WGFD Director and staff on whether a statute change by the legislature or a regulation change by the WGF Commission would be required.
- ❑ Licenses allocated to landowners in this program, would be in addition to the statewide permit quota for NR deer, elk, and antelope.
- ❑ The program would be voluntary on the part of landowners and qualifying landowners would have to own fee title the land to hunt and be a full-time Wyoming resident landowner.
- ❑ Size of the land area qualifying would require a decision as part of the program design's qualification process.
- ❑ Allocation of licenses (number by species and sex), as well as Res and NR, would be determined by the landowner and a local regional G&F warden and Biologist
- ❑ All hunting seasons would occur within the framework of season dates set annually by each G&F region.
- ❑ Money from licenses issued to both Resident and Non-Resident hunters identified by the landowner for each specific ranch will be provided to the Game and Fish, as allocated to each specific landowner in the program.
- ❑ Some landowners involved in this program will have leases to outfitters and some will not. A determination will be required for Outfitters using private lands, exclusively, whether they would be eligible to apply for NR hunters as part of the fulfillment of the statewide permit quota for elk, deer, and antelope.
- ❑ Agreements for this program would be between the landowner and the Game and Fish Dept. An outfitter working on private land would not be given the licenses; however, the

owner of the land could allow an outfitter to manage and conduct the hunts when a member of this program. Such agreements are between the landowner and the outfitter.

- ☐ Hunters allocated one of these permits would be required to conduct their hunting only on those private lands to which their license has been allocated, and any isolated public land parcel within the ranchland's boundaries (eg. small public land tracts and state lands isolated and not accessible to the general public without access permission).
- ☐ Any outfitter permits required for state lands within a ranch's fee title land area or adjacent to the fee title lands would be required for the landowner or the outfitter leasing his lands.
- ☐ The Game and Fish Dept. regional reps. would meet with participating landowners, prepare any specific changes to standard agreements and prepare all materials and information for public consumption and for hunting license holders.
- ☐ The Game and Fish Dept. Public Access program personnel and local Game Warden would work with participating landowners in the enforcement of G&F regulations and specific rules for land use on each participating ranch.
- ☐ Priorities for the selection of Landowner Ranches for Elk, deer, and antelope license allocations will include, but not be limited to, factors such as:
 - Size of the ranch and blocked-nature of the fee title land in the ranchland boundaries
 - The seasonal uses of and relative abundance in each season of use for antelope, deer, and/or elk
 - Habitat quality and past/current improvements (Livestock/wildlife/conservation)
 - Special considerations for recruitment of young hunters, as well as providing free hunting opportunities to disabled hunters (eg. young, old, and Veterans).

SOME ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☐ NAME OF PROGRAM: ??? "Wyoming Landowner Ranching for Wildlife" Program ???
- ☐ All hunt rules would be standard, with any variations described by the landowner, and written into the agreement for a specific ranch.
- ☐ Landowners would be notified of the program, how it will work, who would qualify, and who to contact if interested.
- ☐ Landowners would apply through the nearest Game and Fish District Office by submitting an application for that region.

- ② Local Regional District Supervisor, Game Warden, Biologist, and Public Access personnel from each respective region will select landowners qualified using the application Criteria for consideration.