

# STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR AN EMERGENCY RULE

## CHAPTER 5

### ANTELOPE HUNTING SEASONS

W. S. § 23-1-302 directs and empowers the Commission to fix seasons and bag limits, open, shorten or close seasons on any species or sex of wildlife except predatory animals, predacious birds, protected animals and protected birds.

The Commission proposes to amend Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulation Chapter 5, Antelope Hunting Seasons, to further reduce hunting season license quotas for several antelope hunt areas located in Carbon, Sublette, Teton and Lincoln counties. The areas affected by this action include hunt areas 53, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91 and 101.

Severe winter weather conditions caused record breaking snow depths and prolonged below freezing temperatures throughout Wyoming this year. Antelope hunt areas in the Pinedale and Baggs regions experienced some of the highest winter mortality this year as a result of winter severity and a pneumonia outbreak in Sublette County.

There is an ongoing antelope study in the Pinedale Region which includes a number of radio collared antelope being tracked. As of May 4, 2023, radio collar data indicates that approximately 75% of the collared adult doe antelope have died due to winter severity and pneumonia. This is an increase to the roughly 60% mortality loss data the Department had available in April when hunting seasons were initially set by the Commission.

Recent snowmelt has enabled Pinedale and Green River region wildlife managers to spend more time on the landscape and document further antelope mortality. A significant number of dead antelope have been recently documented by field personnel, which is confirmed with radio collar mortality data.

Antelope license numbers in these hunt areas were initially reduced during the 2023 hunting season setting process. However, more recent radio collar data and increased field observations call for further licensing reductions.

An Emergency Rule is necessary to further reduce antelope license quotas in these hunt areas since the antelope license drawing is scheduled to take place in early June, and there is not ample time to undergo a regular rule making process. The license application period is still open, and hunters have an opportunity to either modify or withdraw their applications by May 31, 2023. Promulgating an Emergency Rule will allow adequate time for the Department to contact license applicants regarding the modification or withdrawal application deadline.